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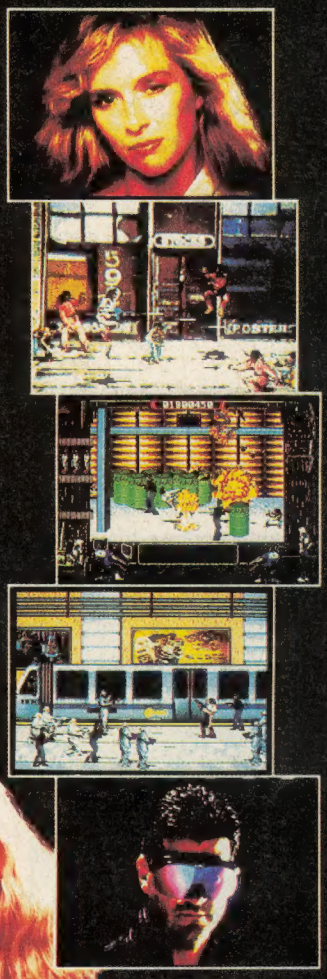

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Loom from Lucasfilm

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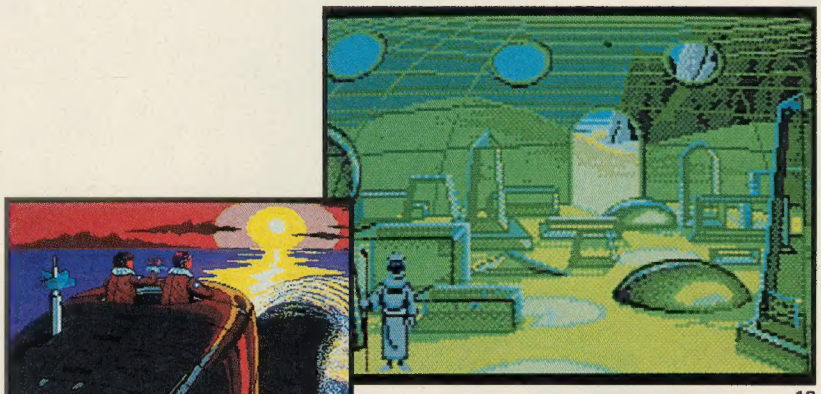

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GAME Player's™ PC STRATEGY GUIDE

May/June 1990

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MPA

EDITOR'S NOTES

THE BUYER'S GUIDE ISSUE

This special buyer's guide issue of the *Game Player's PC Strategy Guide* brings you purchasing tips and other buying information on some of the best computer games available today. In addition to our regular coverage of new games entering the market, our editors have put together a special section that presents dozens of top PC games in a variety of categories.

We're also very pleased to offer in this issue a highly visual, in-depth overview of one of the most innovative computer games in quite awhile — Lucasfilm's *Loom*, designed by Brian Moriarty. Some of you may remember Moriarty's name behind several top Infocom text adventures — *Wishbringer*, *Trinity*, and *Beyond ZORK*. After leaving Infocom in 1988, he joined Lucasfilm as a senior designer and project leader. *Loom*, as you'll see, is a visually stunning graphic adventure that uses an innovative interface for game play. We previewed *Loom* in this magazine some months ago, and it's good to be able to show you the finished product now.

Moriarty has taken great pains to make *Loom* a game that lets the player become immersed in the *story* of the game as much as the challenge of the mystery involved. You'll find that sections of the game unfold like a motion picture. As a part of his approach, Moriarty has also made this a game that's easy to enjoy within a manageable length of time. *Loom* is not a game in which you'll have to invest the next six months of your life. From beginning to end, the game can be finished by an experienced game player in under five hours. But that would be like sprinting through a Japanese tea garden or speed-reading Shakespeare — you can do it, but you'll miss much of the surrounding beauty. If you thoroughly explore the *Loom* environment, you'll come away enchanted.

You'll also find in this is-

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EDITOR'S NOTES

continued from page 4.

sue our regular columns and strategy articles, as well as a special roundup of computer baseball games by contributing editor Neil Randall. It's a fan's dream to own such an array of excellent baseball action and strategy games — and with no lock-outs and no strikes (other than those in the batter's box).

THE SPA AWARDS

This buyer's guide issue is also the perfect place to mention a few recent award winners — games judged by members of the Software Publishers Association (SPA) to have been the best entertainment products during 1989. When thinking about buying your next games, consider the winners of the SPA Excellence in Software Awards for 1989 listed below. Regular readers will note that some of the SPA winners mirror our own *Game Player's* Award choices published in the last issue.

- **Best Technical Achievement** — *RealSound*, a software-based sound-enhancement system for the PC developed and published by Access Software.
- **Best Fantasy Role Playing/ Adventure Program** — *Space Quest III: The Pirates of Pestulon*, a rollicking graphic adventure designed by Mark Crowe and Scott Murphy and published by Sierra On-Line.
- **Best Strategy Program** — *Populous*, a fascinating world simulation designed by Bullfrog Productions and published by Electronic Arts.
- **Best Action/Arcade Program** — *Welltris*, a three-dimensional action puzzle game designed by the same Russian programmer, Alexey Pajitnov, and the Spectrum Holobyte team that brought the world *Tetris*.
- **Critic's Choice Award: Best Consumer Program** — *Sim City*, the innovative and captivating city simulation game designed by Will Wright and published by Maxis Software.
- **Best Simulation Program** — *Sim City*.
- **Best Sports Program** — *Hardball II*, a remarkable action baseball game designed by Distinctive Software and published by Accolade.
- **Best Entertainment Program** — *Sim City*. (The game also won another award as the best curricular program in the SPA's education category!)

Not only did *Sim City* run away with several of the SPA awards this year and the *Game Player's* top PC award, but Maxis Software recently received the Most Innovative Publisher award during the 1990 Computer Game Developer's Conference.

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

Electronic game players have quite a voice in the kinds of games offered by developers and publishers. That fact was underscored during the Software Publishers Association meeting and the Computer Game Developer's Conference, held a week apart this spring. The former brings together publishers of all kinds of computer software, while the latter is an annual conference of the programmers, artists, project directors, and game designers who create the programs the publishers ultimately sell.

Computer game publishers are looking for ways to enlarge the universe of computer users who will be interested in buying their games. In several different ways, computer games have been swamped by the wake brought on by the Nintendo (and now the Sega Genesis and NEC TurboGrafx-16) videogame juggernaut.

If you're reading this magazine, the odds are that you're already well aware of the interactive fun and fascination that computer games offer. But for those of your friends and colleagues who've been turned off (or not yet turned on) by the personal computer, the SPA's consumer software section is making available a free, full-color booklet that's an engaging and gentle introduction to just how personal computers in the home environment can be both entertaining and educational.

Call 1-800-333-3944 to request the free booklet, "The Other Side of Computing." Then the next time someone you know asks you what you see in your computer, you can open *their* eyes. We all want more and better computer games, and this is one small, easy step you can take to help enlarge the market

But for now, enjoy this issue — and please don't hesitate to write to us about anything having to do with the electronic game world. We've recently received some excellent letters concerning our new format. Our thanks to all of those who've been writing. We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Selby Bateman
Editorial Director
Game Player's

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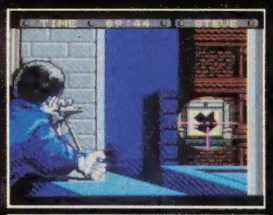

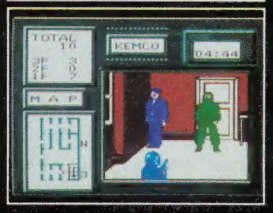

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THE NATIONAL PASTIME — ANY TIME

NEIL RANDALL

Do you remember what you were doing on March 19, 1990? If you're a baseball fan, you probably do. March 19, 1990, was the day you found out that the 1990 baseball season was actually going to take place.

It's almost inconceivable to imagine a summer without baseball. There was a fall without football a few seasons back, but football, whatever its strengths and virtues, is played only once a week, and then only for 16 weeks. But there's a baseball game nearly every summer day from the beginning of April until the end of September.

Not surprisingly, software publishers have been more than eager to capitalize on the national pastime. No other team sport has been simulated on the computer screen as often as baseball (golf is the winner for individual sporting games). Many of these games, moreover, have the blessing of Major League Baseball itself, which is at least a partial guarantee that the sport will be accurately represented.

And accurate representation, of course, is what baseball fans want. Fortunately, computer baseball has a history of being remarkably faithful to the play of the actual game. Back in the early 1980s, the Odyssey II and Intellivision game systems gave us baseball games that felt like real baseball, and SSI's early simulation for the Apple II, creatively entitled *Computer Baseball*, offered a stats game every bit as good as the numerous stats-oriented board games then available. By the time Gamestar's classic *Star League Baseball* hit the Commodore 64 in the mid-80s, baseball had already become the most-simulated sport for computers — and the results were usually the best simulated sports games.

Baseball is suitable for computer simulation because of the very nature of the game. Unlike most team sports, in which several players are on the go at any one time, baseball is easily divided into programmable intervals. The confrontation between pitcher and batter, for instance, is a classic sports duel that is appealing for the same reason it's programmable: The pitcher does his job, then the batter does his, and the only things that matter are where the pitch goes and whether or not the batter hits it.

Fielding is more complex, but since only one player plays the ball at any one time, the limitations are minor. This isn't to say that programming a good baseball simulation is easy — the point is that in baseball more than any other team sport, good programming leads to solid playability.

If you want just one baseball game, however, you've got a tough decision in front of you. There are plenty of solid games from which to choose. This buyer's guide tries to help you solve that problem.

EARL WEAVER BASEBALL: VERSION 1.5

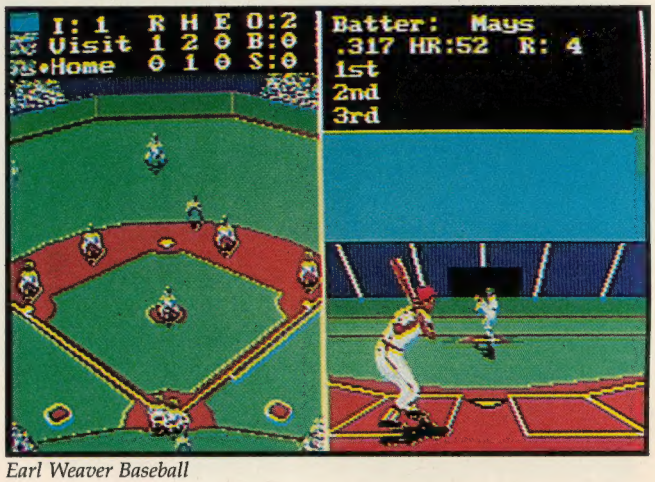
Earl Weaver Baseball dazzled the Amiga community when **Electronic Arts** first released it, and its translation to PCs was extremely successful. While it needs a further upgrade to make use of VGA graphics and at least a couple of sound boards, version 1.5 corrects the original's (not very extensive) shortcomings and makes this game very close to a baseball fan's ideal.

Playing inside any park in the major leagues (or in a park you've designed yourself), you find yourself putting your infielders into the best position; ordering your third baseman to charge for the bunt; asking your catcher if the pitcher seems fatigued; choosing a hit-and-run; checking the wind conditions; getting a radar reading on the speed of the last pitch; and even arguing close calls with the umpire.

Off the field, you can trade players, draft your own team, create your own players, and design and schedule leagues of your chosing. Stats are plentiful, but so is character. Though it would be nice to be able to override the computer Weaver's decisions occasionally, this is a very small flaw in a very strong game.

Weaver tries to be all things to all fans. If you want to play arcade-style baseball, controlling each pitch and swing of the bat yourself, *Weaver* lets you do it. You can create teams and leagues and invite your friends to draft and trade players with abandon. Or if your idea of a great time is sitting in the dugout and managing the team, you can do that, too. You can even distance yourself further by playing game after game in the stats mode, which only reports on the game results.

Weaver is not an especially fast game, its pitcher-batter game isn't as strong as in *Hardball II*, and some actions are just plain hard to do. But it remains the classic baseball game against which all others are judged.



Earl Weaver Baseball

HARDBALL II

The original *Hardball* began its life on the Commodore 64, where it quickly became the graphics champion for that machine. Its release on the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga confirmed **Accolade's** commitment to graphic excellence, and its subsequent entry into the PC market enhanced its reputation even further.

Hardball II keeps the graphic strength and superb pitcher-batter orientation of the original, but adds an even greater choice of options. In fact, *Hardball II* would vault into the top echelon of computer game play if it didn't lack two features — it doesn't have a strong stats-only mode, and it doesn't use real teams and players. In other words, *Hardball II* isn't endorsed by Major League Baseball.

Hardball II

Hardball II's great strength is its pitcher-batter game. Because of the two views it allows — from behind the catcher if you're batting or behind the pitcher if you're pitching — you can study the details of pitch location and speed. *Hardball II* is much stronger as a defensive game than the original game (infielders are no longer hindrances, and outfielders move at reasonable speeds), but the game is great if only for the pitcher-batter duel.

The new features allow you to build leagues, teams, and players, and you can enter league play as well. You can also play in several different stadiums, including Boston's legendary Fenway Park and Toronto's magnificent SkyDome.

MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL II

For sheer elegance of design, *MicroLeague Baseball II* (from **MicroLeague Sports**) is the overall winner. OK, so it doesn't offer the wealth of play options included in *Earl Weaver's* managing game, but its games progress quickly and realistically. Best of all, *MLB II* is extremely easy to learn and play.

A statistics-only game, *MLB II* lets you be the manager, directing your players to perform as you wish. The computer figures out the game results according to algorithms based on the stats available for each player. You don't see this happening, though — all you see on the screen is an attractively rendered park with players moving into their proper positions. But if the pitcher hits the corner of the plate, the batter pulls the ball down the right field line, and the runner beats the throw to the plate, it's because of the comparison of player stats combined with a degree of uncertainty.

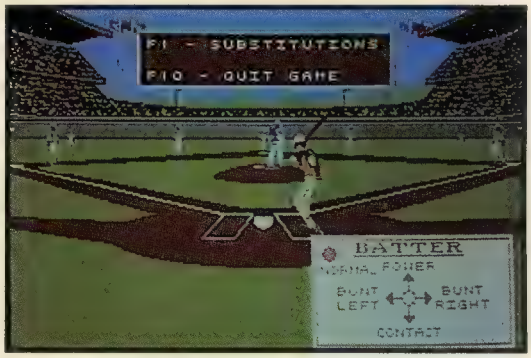
MicroLeague Baseball II

Baseball afficionados can create and add new players, modify existing stats, and build leagues and seasons according to the information available in books, newspapers, and magazines. *MLB II* makes it so easy to alter information that the game has developed quite a loyal following. Even though *Earl Weaver* lets you do many of the same things — even more in some cases — *MLB II* fans remain entranced by their game's flexibility and ease of play. A game will take about 20 minutes, and the options are sufficient without being overwhelming.

PETE ROSE PENNANT FEVER

Pete Rose Pennant Fever has the sharpest "role-playing" focus of any of these games. There are several levels to this **Activision** game, but its strongest is that of general manager. Here, your task is to guide your team through ten consecutive seasons, building strength as you work your way toward a championship. If you're filthy rich, you can play the free-agent market, but your real target should be the pool of untested (but cheap) rookies.

Taking a team through ten seasons (you specify the number of games in a season) is difficult but addictive work. You start out bad (remember the '69 Mets?), but you'll suddenly find yourself winning games (remember the '69 Mets?). Eventually, your team ends up in the World Series (remember the '69 Mets?), and when you win the celebrations will be long (remember ... oh, you know).



Pete Rose Pennant Fever

In its action mode, *Pete Rose* is different from all the rest. Pitching and hitting are well handled, but they take awhile to get used to. Fielding, on the other hand, is extremely difficult, and judging fly balls and sharp grounders will be almost impossible for your first few games. Time and again you'll lose games to errors that aren't really your fault.

But the game's "quest" is strong, and its stats aren't overwhelming. *Pete Rose* is as different from *Earl Weaver* as the two men are in real life, and that alone makes this game worth a look.

MAKING A CHOICE

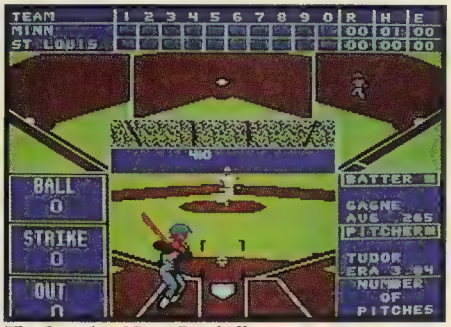
So how should you spend your hard-earned dollars? You should first decide what kind of game you want to play. *MicroLeague Baseball*, for example, is purely a manager's game that settles every issue with statistics. *Pete Rose Pennant Fever* is also stats-oriented, but it adds a little arcade action.

The Sporting News Baseball is even more action oriented, and if you want to capture the pitcher-batter confrontation — the heart of televised baseball — *Hardball II* is going to do the trick. And if you want baseball in all its permutations and with the greatest number of play options, pick up *Earl Weaver Baseball*.

Of course, any dyed-in-the-wool baseball fan will probably want all five. You can't be too careful — it's better to be prepared for a strike than be caught without any summer entertainment.

THE SPORTING NEWS BASEBALL

If **Epyx's** *The Sporting News Baseball* had been released before 1989, it would have been a much more significant game



The Sporting News Baseball

— it's solid enjoyment now, but a few years ago it would have been spectacular. Despite a couple of excellent innovations, *Sporting News* is a kind of poor cousin to these other games simply because any particular feature you want is covered better elsewhere. But as a whole, the game is both interesting and good.

Sporting News lets you use both historic and current teams; play pure baseball; manage teams; manage and play; play leagues; and so on. Its one true innovation is its screen, which divides into several parts according to the number of runners on base. As on televised baseball, you have a closeup of each base runner as the pitch is being thrown. This novelty makes lead-offs, stolen bases, and pick-offs graphically exciting and highly playable.

Positioning fielders is clumsily handled, but you can put your guys practically anywhere you want. As in *Weaver*, you are rewarded for hitting the cut-off man, and the baserunning game is smoother than many simulations.

The Sporting News Baseball is the natural successor to Gamestar's old *Star League Baseball*. That's good, but it might not be good enough. This game has a lot going for it, but it lacks addictive appeal.

GP

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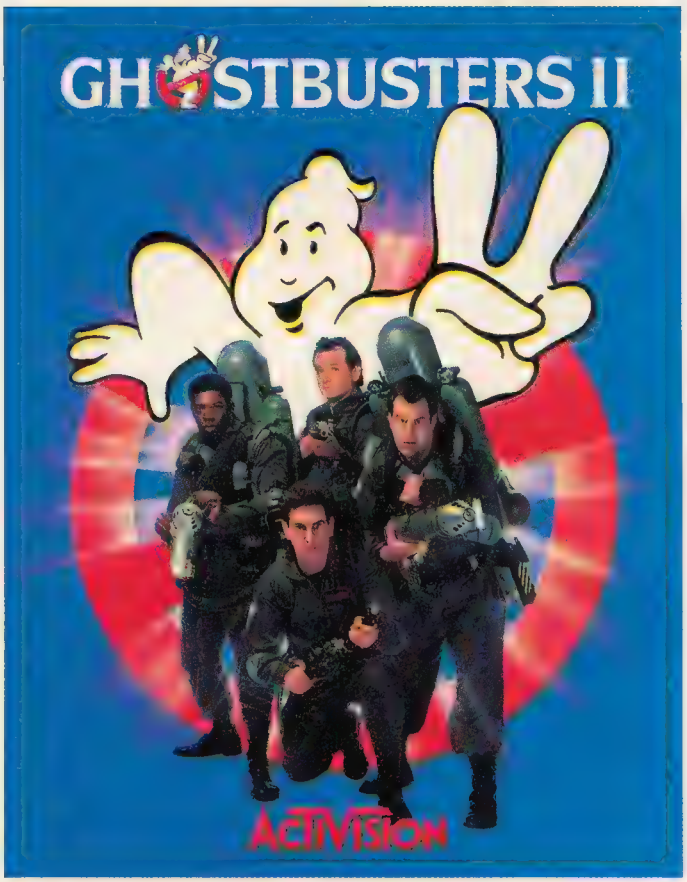

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Legends tell that once, long after the passing of the second shadow, Man used his crafts to become dominant over Nature. Skilled labor became a most valuable asset. Guilds sprang up across the land to work for the common interest of the craftsmen and protect their intricate secrets.

In this Age of Great Guilds, the societies were city-states. Some guilds simply wanted to perfect their craft, but others, such as the Guild of Blacksmiths and the Guild of Clerics, held vast territories with private armies to protect them. These powerful guilds grew more and more ambitious.

Taking a different approach was the Guild of Weavers. These craftsmen developed an entire philosophy based on the terminology of their skills. Before long, they no longer needed flax or dye in order to use their looms — instead they used light and magic to form patterns in the very substance of reality. But because these fabrics had virtues unto themselves — different materials could heal or bring good fortune — members of the Guild of Weavers became outcasts.

To escape persecution, they fled to a rocky island they called Loom. There they continued their craft and formed new rules for their members. No one could marry outside the guild, and the new members who were allowed to learn their secrets were the children of guild members.

As the centuries passed and the other guilds continued to battle amongst themselves, the Guild of Weavers was forgotten. But on the island of Loom, years of inbreeding had brought the guild to the edge of extinction.

Lady Cygna, the distraught mother of a dead child, challenges the guild elders to change the pattern of the loom to bring good fortune to the guild members. But they claim that they have lost the ability to change the pattern and can only watch it unfold. Late one night, Lady Cygna weaves a gray thread through the pattern and revives her baby. But when the elders discover what she has done, they turn her into a swan and sentence her to wander the skies in mournful solitude.

Thus is Bobbin Threadbare born — a child of the loom itself. The elders fear Bobbin and give him to Mother Hetchel, nursemaid to Lady Cygna, to rear. It is decided that he must be brought up outside the guild until he turns 17. At that time the elders will convene to decide his future.

Secretly, Mother Hetchel teaches Bobbin some secrets of the guild. He learns of the *distaff*, the instrument ancient weavers used to spin flax into thread. Now the distaff is used to weave music and light into threads of influence. A spell called a *draft* can be cast with the distaff, and each spell is made of four threads — the throw, beat, treadle, and rest. By the time he turns 17, Bobbin is able to cast the simplest draft, the open spell.

But while Bobbin had been learning the ancient craft of the weavers, the elders had been watching the loom. Bobbin's birth threw the pattern into chaos. Now his destiny is somehow tied to the apocalypse. Without some kind of intervention, the pattern will keep disintegrating.

LOOM

LESLIE MIZELL

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick optional; mouse recommended; supports sound boards.

Loom is a delightful game to play for many reasons. For one, the graphics are absolutely spellbinding, even in a time when VGA graphics are becoming the norm. The richness of the colors in *Loom* is practically unmatched by any game, VGA graphics or not.

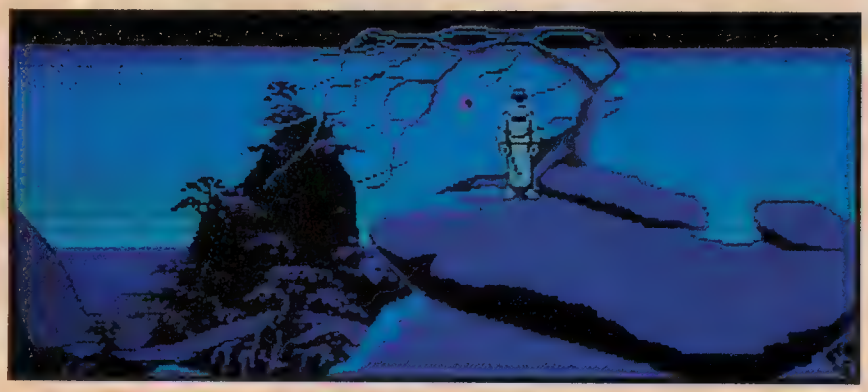
It is also an easy game to play. While those who thrive on role-playing adventures that take months to finish are going to miss the challenge, it's a breath of fresh air to anyone who has ever struggled to build experience points, only to die repeatedly in battle. In *Loom*, you can't die. Did you catch that? You *can't* die.

Brian Moriarty, the *Loom* project leader, wanted to exorcise the extraneous elements from this game and leave players with just the characters' power. So the game consists of three operations: moving from guild to guild, selecting objects, and discovering new drafts and figuring out what drafts to use in different situations.

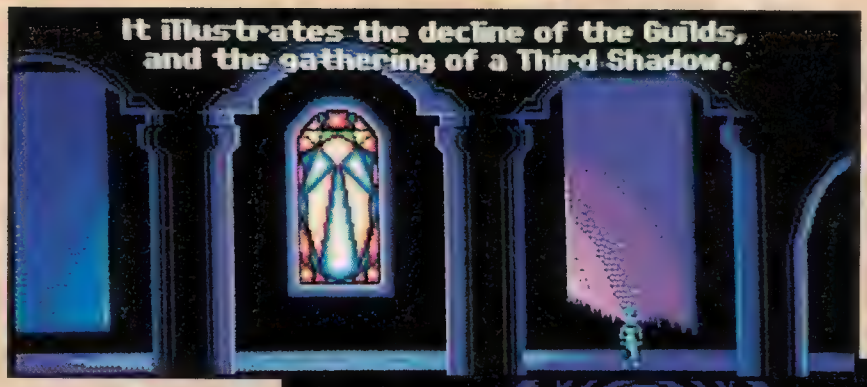
Point and click at objects, and most of them will teach you a draft. You can spin a draft on most of the objects, too, but you have to discover if a draft in your position opens objects, untwists them, dyes them, or performs any of the other influences you can read about in the Book of Patterns. It's important to remember that any spell that can be woven can be *unwoven* as well. As you collect the drafts, you'll often find that they contain threads not yet in your possession. You begin the game with the ability to spin three threads — C, D, and E. You earn the F thread when you leave the island, and the other threads are earned as you gain experience.

You can set the difficulty of your game by selecting the Practice game, in which the threads are named for you as a draft is spun; the Standard game, in which you must match the threads with the glowing distaff without help; and the Expert game, in which you must play the distaff without any help.

Loom is a linear game — you won't be able to progress without completing certain tasks. If you're stuck for more than ten minutes, you've probably left some corner unsearched or some draft unspun. Large sections of the game, especially those that further the plot, are computer controlled, so you'll be watching the game as much as you play it. But both watching and playing *Loom* is a rewarding experience for any game fan.

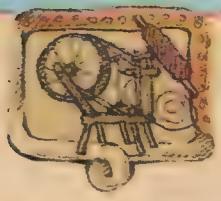


Bobbin has been an outcast from the Guild of Weavers until now, dawn on his seventeenth birthday. As the game begins, the elders are meeting to decide his destiny.

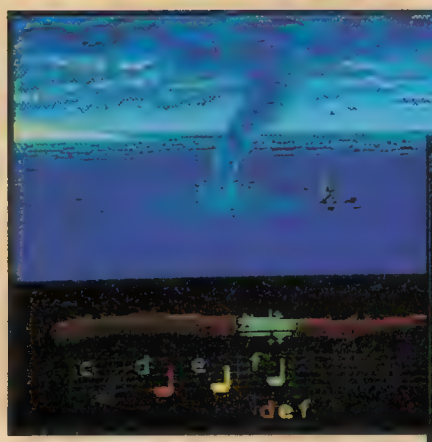


As he walks toward the elders' meeting, Bobbin learns more of the history of the Age of Guilds by examining the tapestries which hang in the hall. The third tapestry appears to be unraveling.

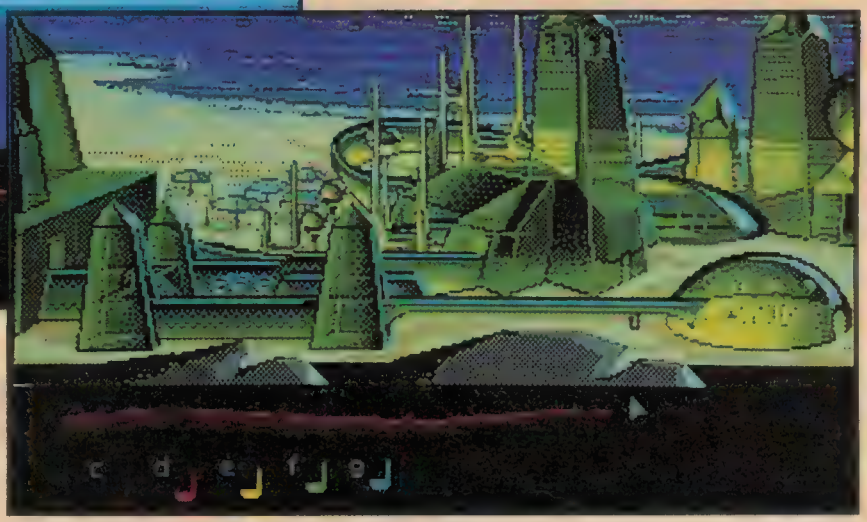
When the elders are sent outside the pattern, Mother Hetchel explains to Bobbin that it is his *destiny to prevent chaos from destroying the pattern of the universe.*



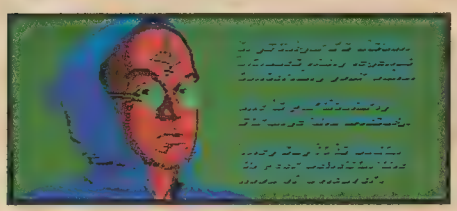
Though gold and riches are of no use to members of the Guild of Weavers, Bobbin can still learn a valuable draft inside this tent.



At last the time comes for Bobbin to leave Loom and visit the other guilds in search of the swans. He can only get past the waterspout by remembering that a draft woven can be unwoven.



Members of the Guild of Glassmakers value clarity above all else. They won't believe the existence of anything they can't see with their eyes.



Master Goodmold tells Bobbin a legend that the weaver had heard rumors of himself. What happens if a stranger glances beneath the hood of his weaver's garb? Will they indeed die a horrible death?

Bobbin can look into the sphere to see the future just as the bishop plans to. He should look three times, and then return to the Guild of Shepherds with new knowledge.

Bobbin learns several drafts from the shepherds — sleep, stealth, and healing. Unfortunately, he is unable to help this lamb until he earns the A thread needed to spin the healing draft.

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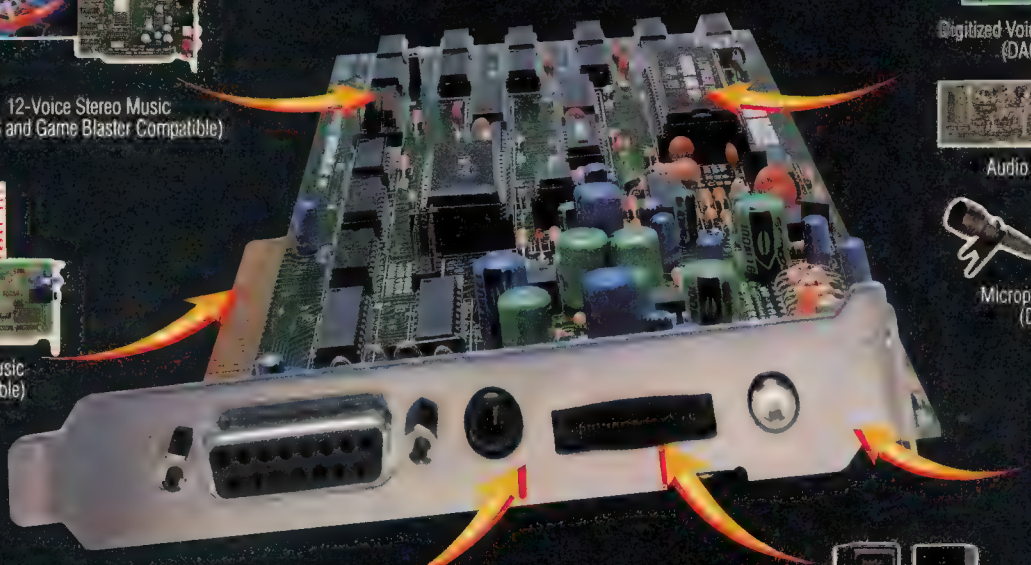

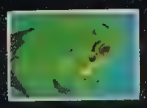

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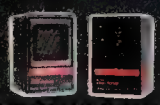

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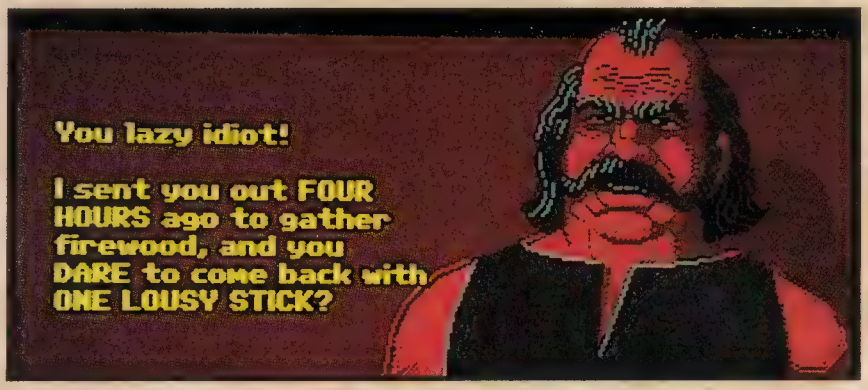
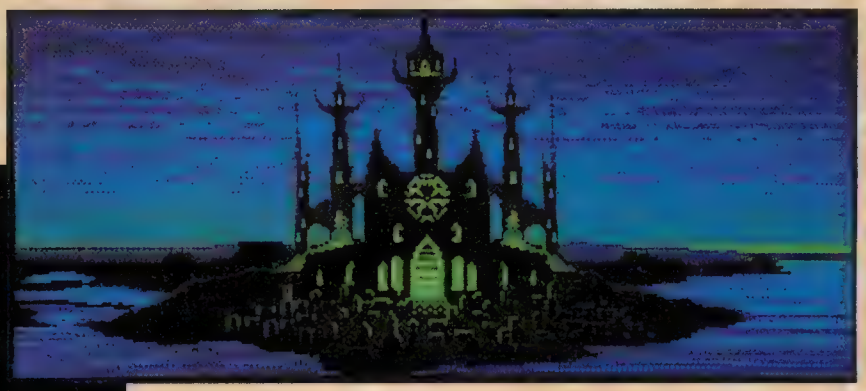
It is possible to dispense with the dragon at least two ways. Bobbin can put him to sleep and his snoring will set the straw on fire. Or he can spin the fear draft to turn into the object the dragon fears most — flame.

The Guild of Blacksmiths is very powerful — and works closely with the Guild of Clerics. Only members are allowed to pass through its iron gates. If only Bobbin looked like that young boy Rusty he met in the hills.



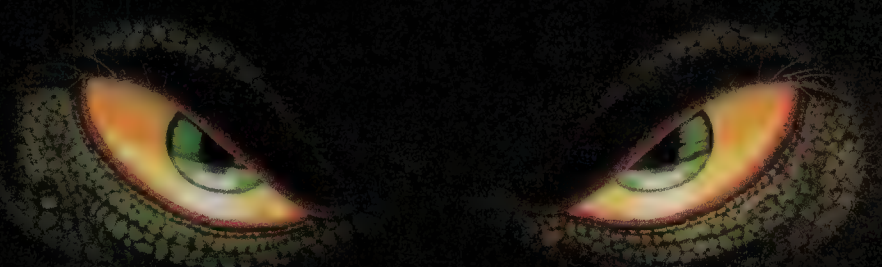
Was it impetuous to enter the Guild of Blacksmiths? At the moment, it appears that Bobbin's distaff is about to provide fuel to sharpen weapons for the Guild of Clerics' mysterious army.



When Bobbin is caught by Bishop Mandible, he is immediately spirited away to the Guild of Clerics. At last the bishop's wicked plan is about to be told.

Locked away without his distaff, Bobbin seems to be helpless. But remember that Mother Hetchel promised to help him if he ever became separated from the staff.

MORE FRIENDS.
MORE FIENDS.
MORE ALLIES.
MORE ADVERSARIES.
THE ISLAND OF KESMAI IS WAITING FOR YOU.



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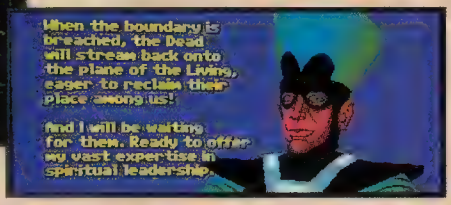
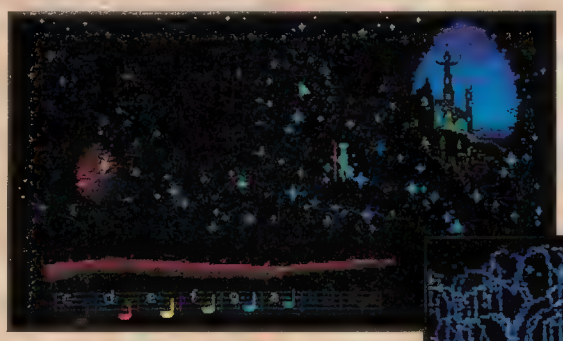
In the years since the Guild of Weavers separated itself from the other guilds, Bishop Mandible has never ceased to envy its power to spin the fabric of reality.

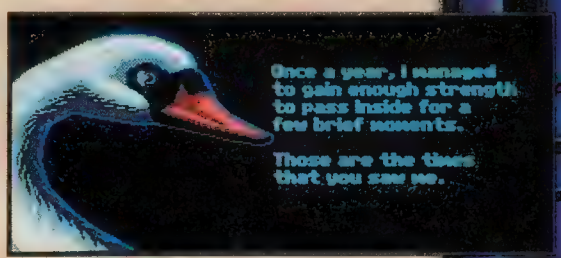

When the boundary is breached, the Dead will stream back onto the plane of the Living, eager to reclaim their place among us!
And I will be waiting for them. Ready to offer my vast expertise in spiritual leadership.

Now that he has Bobbin, the bishop plans to open the graves of the dead and form a mighty army in allegiance to him. But what can you expect from the Transultimate Apostle of the Antisecular Conclave of Clerics?



When Chaos escapes through a tear in the pattern, Bobbin has no choice but to stop him. The fabric of reality is crumbling around him, but he is about to fulfill his destiny.

Outside the pattern, Bobbin at last meets his brave mother, Lady Cygna. She swims with the other elders on the Shore of Wonders.



Any task Bobbin has left undone outside the pattern will be pointed out to him by Lady Cygna. The end of the game is near, so he must proceed with caution.

Back at the loom where his destiny began, Bobbin must unweave the threads before the dead ones can take control. He must trust the loom. It knows all the drafts he needs.

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Bad Blood

MATTHEW A. FIRME

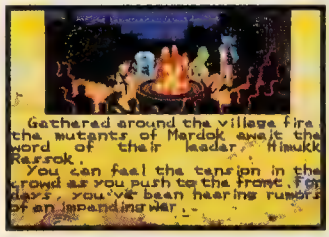
Nuclear holocaust is perhaps the single most frightening possibility to face mankind. But it is also a strangely appealing thought because it would provide a kind of massive eraser with which to wipe away society as we know it and build anew from its ashes.

The idea of a Phoenix-like rebirth has provided the basis for many science fiction novels and films. And now it serves as the backdrop for **Origin's** new role-playing/action game, *Bad Blood*.

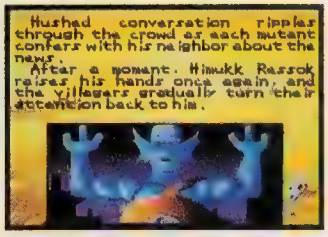
Centuries have passed since the Great Fires destroyed the mythic civilization of the Ancients. Now their descendants are a scattered and divided people. On the open plains, far from the exoskeletons of the abandoned cities, live the Mutes. These mutant-children of man live in small villages throughout the land, and through the centuries they have developed their own dialect and culture.

Living in walled towns built on the rubble of the past civilization live the pure-blooded humans, or Humes, as they are degradingly referred to by the Mutes. The humans fear and hate the mutants of the plains; in those mutants — and in the increasing numbers of mutant children born to the Humes — the human townsfolk see the continuing effects of the Great Fires. Yet they keep the Mutes as a slave-labor force, using them to dig through the rubble of the past in search of lost technologies.

The two factions, the Mutes and the Humes, have battled one another for generations. Until now there has been a give and take to the fighting. The Mutes have held their homes in the open plains, and the Humes have managed to secure a steady stream of Mute slaves. But as *Bad Blood* begins, Lord Dominix of the Hume town of Yvrium is planning to unite the humans in all-out war on the free mutants of the plains. With the aid of technology and weapons from the time of the Ancients, Dominix hopes to wipe the Mutes from the plains.


Gathered around the village fire the mutants of Mardok await the word of their leader, Himukk Ressok.
You can feel the tension in the crowd as you push to the front. For days, you've been hearing rumors of an impending war...

For centuries, humans cast their own mutant children out to die on the plains. But many survived and established villages like Mardok. Tensions between humans and mutants rose.


Hushed conversation ripples through the crowd as each mutant confers with his neighbor about the news.
After a moment, Himukk Ressok raises his hands once again, and the villagers gradually turn their attention back to him.

Ressok, the Himukk of Mardok, knew that to try to win a war between Humes and Mutes would be foolish. Instead he sought out a sole warrior who could prevent war.

Your mission can succeed no matter which of the three characters your choose to portray. But your strategy must be based on the characters' different traits.

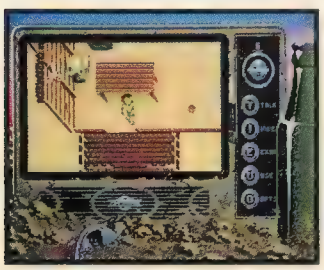
"Hmmm," Ressok says thoughtfully. "I hear smarts in what each of you says. Which tuff do I send?
(Select the tuff that Ressok should send to avert the coming war.)

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE MUTANT

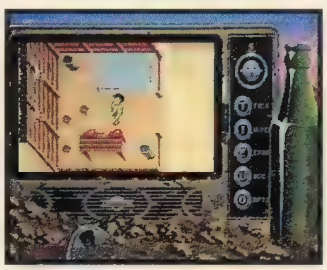
As *Bad Blood* begins, you have a choice of playing as one of three characters from the Mute village of Mardok. Each can succeed in stopping Dominix's war, but each must employ different tactics to achieve success.

As the game's beautiful title sequence unfolds, the leader, or *Himukk*, of Mardok calls three warriors to step forward: Dekker, the only Hume ever born to Mute parents, is a

If the shaman mentions anything of importance, it will appear on the menu of topics. By starting chitchat you can often pick up vital information.



The Himukk of Nivvik, a winged, fairy-like Mute, tells you of the evil Kejeks. You soon have the opportunity to meet them face to face.



While in Nivvik, don't forget to take advantage of the local hospitality. A hot meal, a soft bed, and a bit of "save game" will leave you better prepared for the journey ahead.

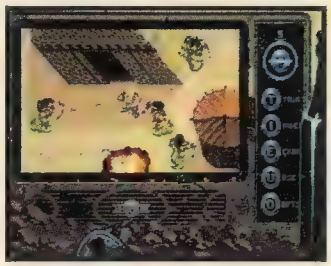
perfect and handsome man, yet untested as a fighter; Jakka is a fearsome warrior, quick and vicious, yet her loyalty is questionable; and Varigg, a seven-foot, green-skinned Mute with incredible strength.

Each of the three heroes has unique advantages. The human Dekker can walk unquestioned into the Hume city of Yvrium, which the green-skinned Varigg obviously cannot do. And although she looks human, Jakka has the valuable mutant ability to shoot a kind of death ray from her patch-covered eye. The advantage of such a long-range weapon is considerable, although soon into the game you'll find weapons that allow all three characters to deal death from afar. Varigg's main asset is his formidable strength and stamina, although another point in his favor is that it's a lot of fun to play as a green mutant.

Once you've chosen your character, you are ready to begin the game. The role-playing aspect of *Bad Blood* is soon apparent, as conversation with the people you meet in your village turns up more questions than answers. The firetender in Mardok — and in every other village — is a good person to query. From him you learn that not only the Mutes of Mardok, but also those of every Mute village, are dependent on your ability to stop Dominix's war on the mutants. How you alone can stop a war, though, is a question no one seems able to answer.

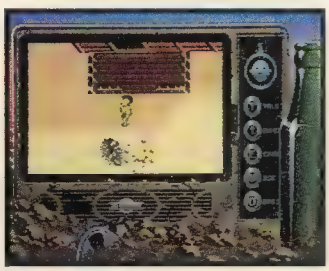
Conversation and action (other than walking and attacking) are selected with a very simple, menu-driven interface. You never type in commands or questions; instead you can select "talk," "inventory," "use," "examine," or "options" from a menu alongside the view screen. When talking, specify a person, and then pick from three choices of "talk about...," "start chitchat," and "say bye." The topics available for conversation are determined by the news you learn and what you are able to discern from each topic. Important words appear on the topic menu and then drop off as you learn all there is to know about each.

Despite the relative simplicity of the interface, you'll find that the characters you meet are pretty interesting folks, from the odd speech patterns of the Mutes to the Moonie-esque assertions of the cultists in Zero Town to the refreshingly progressive views of a few of Yvrium's merchants.



After some pretty fierce combat, you finally find the Kejek camp. It's no use trying to bargain with these Mutes. A better tack is "the bazooka into a crowd" technique demonstrated here.

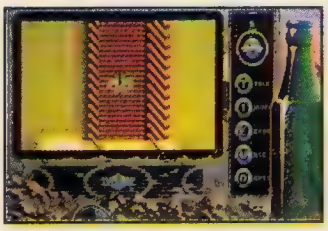
Incidently, the "talk about" prompt is not always the key to ferreting new facts out of a stranger. It's often far more productive to start chitchat, allowing the speaker to



The shaman tells you that you'll need a boat to find the Oracle. Back in Nivvik, the firetender can help you find someone willing to help you.

let slip anything he may know. Then, once the topic is available on your menu, you can ask about it specifically.

So in Mardok you not only learn that you must stop a war on your people, but you also discover that a fellow called the Oracle may be able to help you. By asking around, you finally learn that this Oracle is a friend of the shaman of Nivvik. Then, having determined all you can in Mardok, you set out, walking north and west along the river Noxxus toward the village of Nivvik.

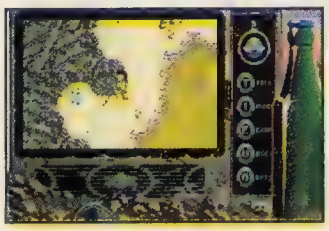


The fisherman can offer not only a fair price, but also a safe spot to save the game. After all, the trip across the lake can be hazardous.

THAT LONG, LONESOME ROAD

Getting to and from the many locations in the game is no easy task. The world of *Bad Blood* is enormous, with lakes, rivers and mountains all conspiring against any shortcuts. In addition, the animals on the plains are fierce critters. You have to battle huge, blood-spewing mutant turtles. Bushbugs — ants as large as dogs — attack suddenly from the sand. Fierce wild dogs called Lupussus dash in and rip at your legs. And sometimes the animals are the *least* of your worries.

Once you reach the far side of the lake, you'll probably have had your fill of water monsters.



These bazooka shells help make the boat ride back more enjoyable. Somewhere in these mountains you'll find the mysterious Oracle.

The Oracle won't offer much help until you try some chitchat. Even then, he demands that you run an errand before he'll discusses the impending war.

Zero Town, an irradiated ruin, still contains some valuable examples of the craftsmanship of the Ancients. It is also home to some pretty nasty Mutes, not to mention a level of radiation fatal to humans.

Around Zero Town, whose ancient buildings are so irradiated that humans quickly succumb to radiation poisoning, you're attacked by slight, dark-robed Mutes called the Cultists. These odd people are sometimes gregarious, inviting you to join their cult, but at other times bloodthirsty in the extreme. And then there are the Devols, so hideously mutated that not even the Mutes are safe from them.

In the mountain valleys

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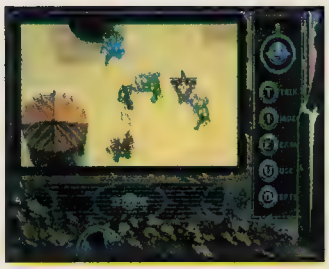
around Yvrium, your greatest danger comes in the form of the Kejek. These foul Mutes, serpentine and revolting, make their living as slave traders. In raids organized and led by human soldiers from Yvrium, the Kejek hunt their mutant brothers down like rats, selling them into slavery. Any dealings you have with them are bound to end in violence. One good thing about attacking slavers, though, is that they often carry some powerful weapons.

After a long search, you find the Apple, symbol of a long-dead technology. Be ready for a fight, though, when you take it.



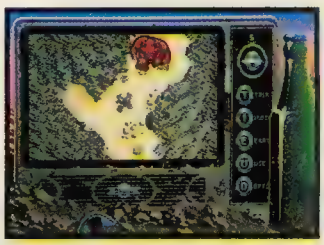
You won't be able to talk to Artus until his captors are gone, and there's only one way to make them leave. Be careful not to shoot Artus in the ensuing scuffle.

By the time you get to Nivvik, you'll no doubt be either a pretty good fighter or close to death. But each animal you defeat adds food to your pack as well as the occasional dried or fresh heart, which can restore your health.

The conflict can get a little thick at times, especially for those players interested primarily in role-playing. But the *Bad Blood* designers have added a feature that allows players to select either a warrior or adventurer mode, and the latter lessens the amount of fighting you must do to get from point A to point B.

In Nivvik, you should start asking questions about the Oracle. But Nivvik has a few other amenities — not the least of which is a place to sleep. A quiet bed in a friendly village is your invitation to select the "save game" option. Each time you save, your character lies down for a few hours' snooze and a chance to recuperate. And if you wander through the homes in the village (the townspeople don't really seem to mind), you can find such helpful items as weapons, food, and hearts.

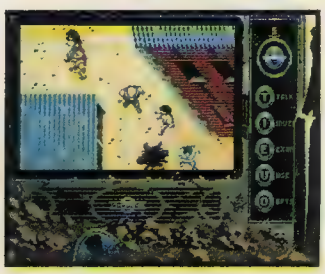
One thing you do *not* want to do in a village, though, is kill a resident. Sure, it's easy to hit the space bar accidently and fire a shotgun blast into a crowd, but the natives won't be understanding. Once you commit this ultimate *faux pas*, you may as well head for the hills. No one will speak to you, and you need answers if you are to stop Dominix's war on the Mutes.



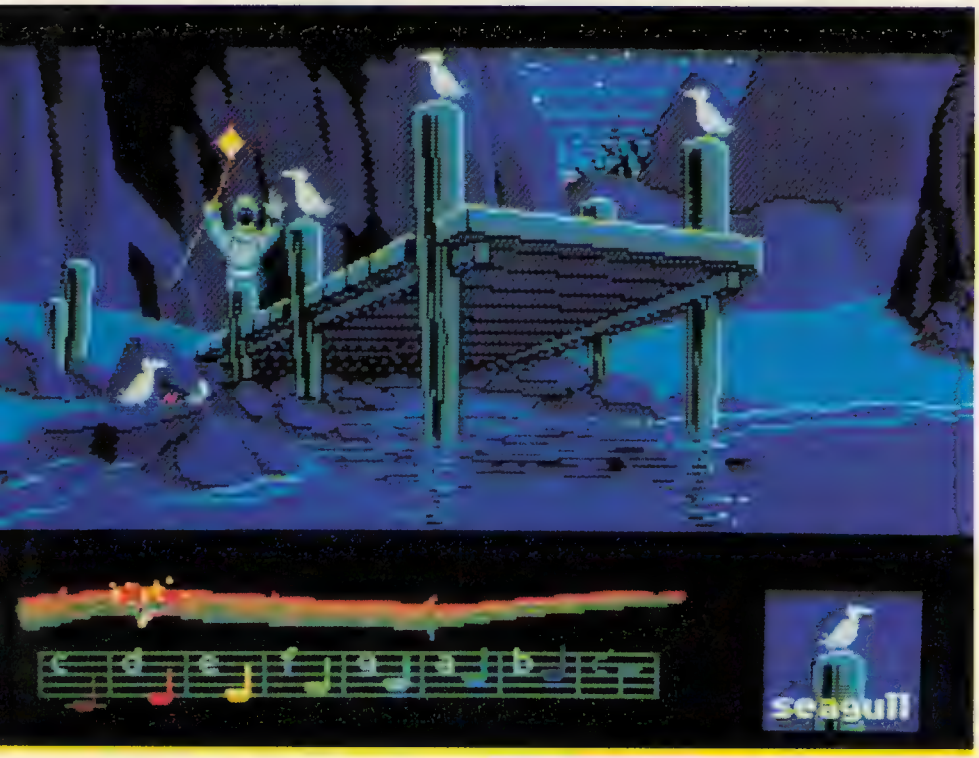
At any time during your travels, you may choose to hunt the Urse, a mutant bear of incredible strength and ferocity. There's a very useful weapon inside his cave.

Finally, you learn from the Himukk of Nivvik that she has indeed heard of the Oracle. The village shaman knows just where to find him — only he's been taken by Kejek slavers. So off you go, into the valley of the Kejek, somewhere south of Yvrium.

The Oracle loosens up once you bring him the Apple and sends you off to the village of Okkarn. The Mutes in Okkarn are not as open to new ideas as those in Nivvik, so be ready for trouble.



Compared to the Mute villages, the Hume town of Yvrium is enormous. Dekker or Jakka can walk right into the town, but the mutant Varigg must disguise himself somehow.



The game is fantasy. The interface is magic.

Alone on a craggy hilltop, high above an island shrouded in perpetual mist, your quest begins. But tread gingerly, because while the world of *Loom*™ is breathtakingly beautiful, unspeakable danger awaits the unsuspecting.

Trepidation soon gives way to bravado as you peek inside abandoned tents in the village. Stumbling over a discarded weaver's distaff, you watch in wonder as it gradually glows and resonates with a sequence of musical notes. Tentatively at first, you point the staff and repeat the notes. After considerable experimentation, you may discover the power to see in the dark. Or weave straw into gold. And eventually find the means to leave the island itself.

Not all the Guilds welcome strangers.

A spell weaver's power is not for the sheepish.

A fantastic odyssey ensues, as menacing waterspouts, merciless dragons and exotic cities draw you deeper and deeper into the fantasy. Armed with the distaff's magic power, you stride fearlessly across vast, cinematic landscapes. Seeking the arcane knowledge possessed by the Great Guilds, accumulated and refined since the dawn of time.

Typing is banished from this kingdom.

Loom is more than a masterpiece of fantasy storytelling. With *Loom,* Lucasfilm™ Games literally redefines the fantasy computer game experience. Simple point n' click actions move your character, select objects, and perform magic. No cumbersome keystrokes, text parsing, maze mapping, or inventory management intrude to break the spell.

We even transport you to the Age of the Great Guilds before you turn on the computer. With a lavishly produced, 30-minute drama on Dolby® Stereo audio cassette that's included with the game. Recorded by Lucasfilm's Academy Award-winning Sprocket Systems, it introduces the characters and sets the scene for the impending, epic struggle against imposing odds.

Then it's full immersion into *Loom*'s 3-Dimensional, scrolling panoramic landscape. Where detailed animation, high definition graphics, startling special effects and stirring musical score combine to create a total environment. Captivating you from the opening scene to the final climax.

And your quest for a truly magical fantasy adventure is finally realized.

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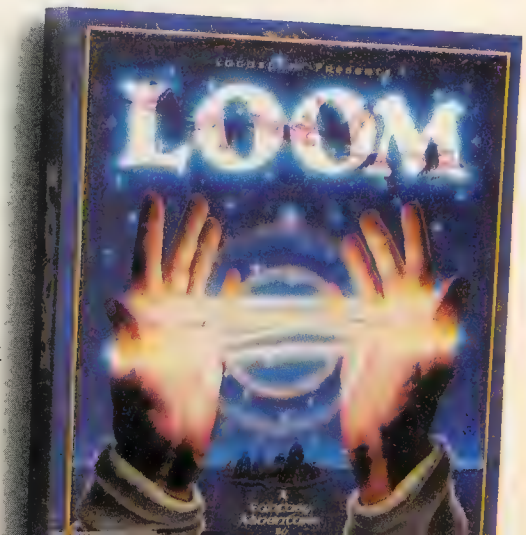

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You incur the wrath of the Yvrium militia when you free Bessek, the Mute hero. Pay careful attention to what Bessek says — especially his startling revelation about Dominix.

FOLLOW THAT DREAM

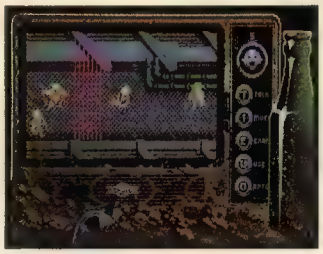
As you wander the twisting valleys of the mountains, look around. The Kejek and the Yvrium slavers have stashed weapons and ammo all through the hills, and there are some pretty impressive finds to be made — bazookas, bows and arrows, knives, and sawed-off shotguns.

Once you've rescued the shaman and spoken with the Oracle, clues begin to come more quickly. You'll begin to see what must be done to bring peace to all mutants and humans, and the task will take you from one side of the land to the other.

The world of *Bad Blood* is a very polished one, rich in detail and texture. The graphics are very impressive, as is the musical score, and the documentation is both helpful and enjoyable to read. With *Bad Blood*, the talented designers at Origin have shown once again that the *premise* of nuclear holocaust can be fun.

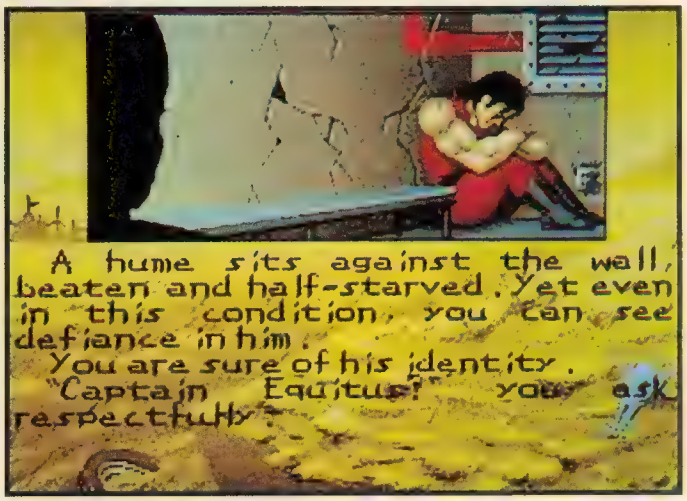
GP

The Himukk of the Subs will tell you how to find Equitus. Be sure you've gathered all you can in Zero Town. You'll need some tools in the very near future.



The catacombs deep beneath Dominix's palace are filled with Devols and other dangers. Try to use the old technology you find to your advantage.

Back in Zero Town, search for the Mute resistance headquarters, the Sub Way. These tracks are a good sign, but the swarming mutant rats must be exterminated.


A hume sits against the wall, beaten and half-starved. Yet even in this condition, you can see defiance in him.
You are sure of his identity.
"Captain Equitus!" you ask respectfully.

With the rescue of Equitus, the war can be ended. Thanks to your bravery and intelligence, the Humes and Mutes will come to a new understanding.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory for VGA or MCGA graphics; 512K for EGA or Tandy 16-color graphics; 384K for CGA graphics; joystick optional; supports sound boards.

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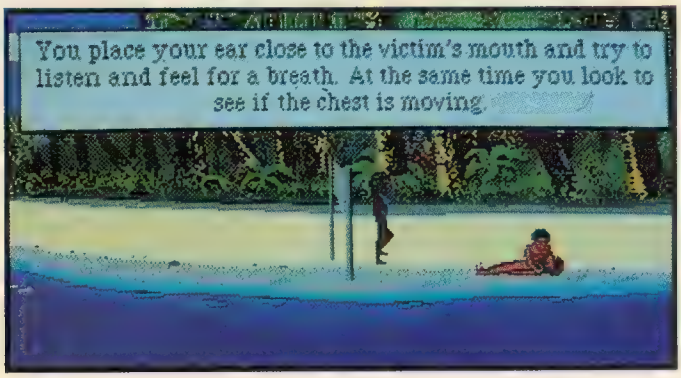

You place your ear close to the victim's mouth and try to listen and feel for a breath. At the same time you look to see if the chest is moving.

Saving lives is one of the first duties of an officer in Iceman. *Follow the instructions for CPR in your technical manual, and this beach bunny will be bouncing around in no time.*

Code Name: Iceman

LESLIE MIZELL

You loved Tom Clancy's books, and you were first in line to see *Das Boot* and *The Hunt for Red October*. Now what's a poor submarine fan to do? If you're smart, you'll grab a copy of *Code Name: Iceman*, a seaworthy simulation-adventure from **Sierra**.

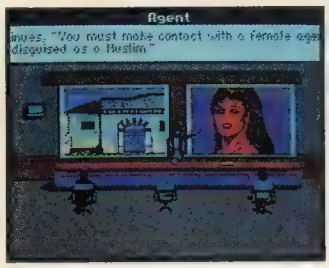
Those folks at Sierra must have groaned, however, when the Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War thawed. In this age of *glasnost* and almost universal democracy, the Communist Menace isn't, and espionage writers are scrambling to find new bad guys to replace the Soviets. But evidently *Code Name: Iceman* was too far along for Jim Walls, the designer of the *Police Quest* series, to follow suit.

So the game involves a U.S. ambassador kidnapped by Middle Eastern terrorists. Or are they really from the Middle East? Is that a Soviet accent we detect? And as you start out on a mission to rescue the ambassador, your submarine is besieged by Communist ships and subs faster than you can say *borscht*.

Still, once you've accepted *Iceman* as being a little out of date, you can start to wallow in the most complex adventure Sierra has ever produced. To play the *Police Quest* series of games, the only insider knowledge of the criminal justice system you needed was repeated viewings of "Starsky and Hutch" or "Hawaii 5-0." You had to shoot targets, conduct searches, question witnesses, and collect evidence. It wasn't difficult for any couch potato who'd watched a few reruns.

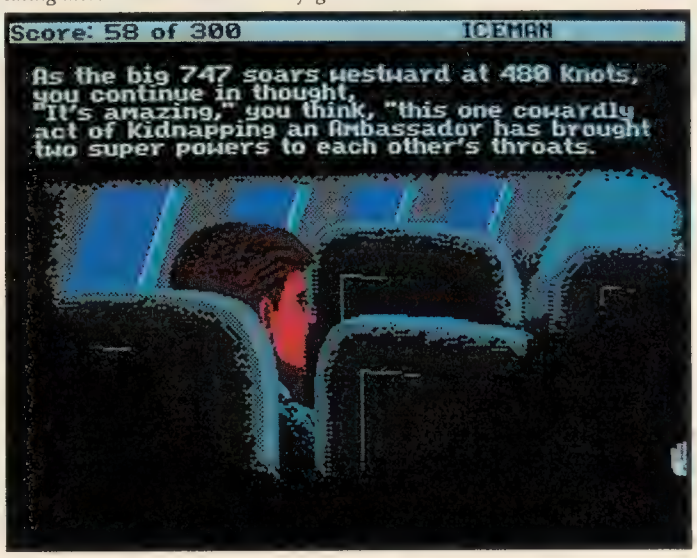
But playing *Iceman* is truly like going through naval drills. Sandwiched between the beach scene and the rescue of the ambassador — typically Sierra interactive sessions — is an intricate submarine simulation. By the time you land in Tunisia, you'll feel like you've been through basic training under one of the toughest instructors ever to wear a uniform.

Do you like blondes or brunettes? Since your opening line is "Can I buy you a drink?" maybe you should try your luck with the brunette. The blonde already has a tall cold one.



Hmm. That agent your superior is talking about during the briefing looks vaguely familiar. Will that one-night stand in Tahiti come back to haunt you?

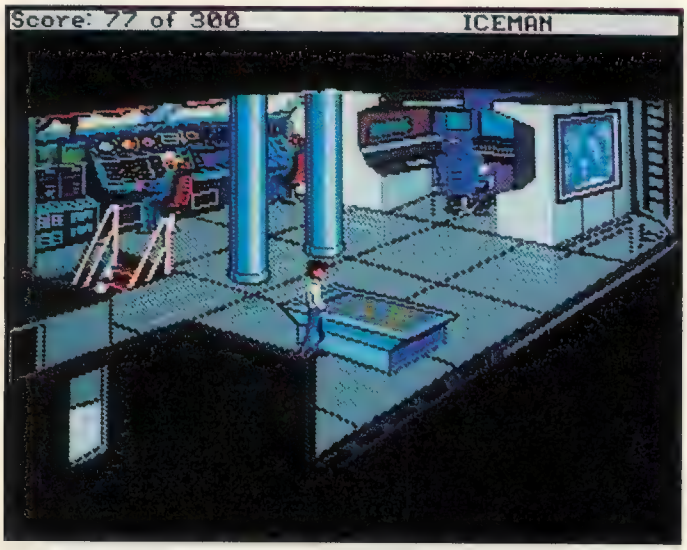
You barely have time to catch your breath from the trip to Washington when you're eating more smoked almonds on a flight to Hawaii.


Score: 58 of 300
ICEMAN
As the big 747 soars westward at 480 knots, you continue in thought,
"It's amazing," you think, "this one cowardly act of kidnapping an Ambassador has brought two super powers to each other's throats.

BEACH BLANKET VOLLEYBALL

As John Westland, you begin *Iceman* on vacation in Tahiti. It's a tough life for a tough secret agent. But the sun-filled holidays aren't going to last long. Trouble seems to follow you no matter where you go.

As a matter of fact, danger is right by your shoulder even when you join a friendly game of volleyball on the beach. One of your bikini-clad opponents ventures too far into the surf to retrieve the ball. You must rescue and revive her. Luckily, a naval officer's technical manual contains life-saving directions for cardiopulmonary resuscitation.



Once you're aboard the Blackhawk, *your first duty is to map the course to Tunisia. Choose five waypoints and map a course of straight lines between them.*

Your day in the sand turns into a night under the stars when you meet Stacey. You seem to make awfully good time with her, but the next morning you awake to a note on your pillow. And then you find that her earring contains some microfilm. Was she a fellow U.S. agent or a Mata Hari?

Your waypoints will take you through the Bering Strait, across the Arctic Ocean, around Greenland, and into the Atlantic. Plot close to land — too far off the optimum course and you'll have to start over.

By now the world situation is heating up faster than the Tahitian sand. You're called back to Washington when a U.S. ambassador is kidnapped, seemingly by an oil-rich terrorist organization. At your Pentagon briefing, you're told to make contact with an agent in Tunisia. The best way to sneak into the country's harbor seems to be by submarine, so the USS *Blackhawk*, an advanced nuclear sub, awaits you in Hawaii. The rescue of the ambassador — and possibly the peace of the entire free world — rests on your shoulders.

RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP

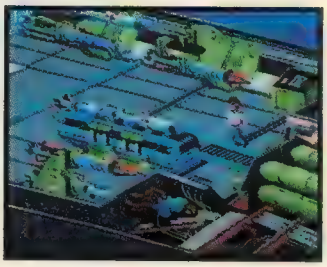
From the moment you board the USS *Blackhawk*, you must prove that you are capable of running a submarine. Once you break coded messages from the Navy and the CIA, your orders are complete. You must maneuver the submarine undetected through the Bering Strait, beneath the icecaps of the Arctic Ocean, and down into the Atlantic, where you'll sneak into Tunisia for the rescue.

Chart your course by selecting five waypoints between Hawaii and Tunisia. If you enter the longitude and latitude of the points, the sub's computer will inform you if the waypoint you've selected is possible. Choose your waypoints carefully — if you veer more than a few hundred miles off the optimum course, you'll have to start again.

Once you've selected your course, you'll want to become more familiar with the interior of the submarine. Find your way around its claustrophobic expanse, making sure that everyone is working diligently and that all the equipment is functioning normally.

What's this in the torpedo room? Some of the equipment doesn't cycle properly. Luckily, there's a cabinet of spare parts in the machinists' room. But if you think a washer is strictly for laundry and a cylinder is something only cars have, you might have a little trouble fixing the delicate machinery of a nuclear submarine.

First of all, take careful measurements of the defective parts. Then go back the machinists' room and find the spare parts you need. The cotter pin will need adjusting, so you'll have to fire up the equipment. It's not hard — just go straight down the line of machines from right to left, using the lathe first, then the drill press, and finally the grinder.



Another one of your duties involves making sure all submarine machinery is functioning properly. You need to be able to count on your torpedoes in case you run into trouble.

No sooner do you arrive back in the control room than the captain insists you take a lesson in submarine steering. He'll bark commands at you, but try to concentrate on using the keyboard controls or identifying the correct instruments with your mouse.

Though the control panel of the *Blackhawk* looks intimidating, you're actually concerned with little of it. The depth of the sub is controlled with the up and down arrow keys or by clicking on the dive lever. The speed is controlled with the + and - keys or by clicking on the engine lever.

VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

Right after you get these simple controls in hand, a Soviet ship will attack. This act of aggression is actually a study in patience for anyone who has ever played an arcade game. Your natural tendency may be to

start shooting back, but you should wait until the ship is well within your range — that's more like 7,000 feet away, not 16,000 — before you begin firing.

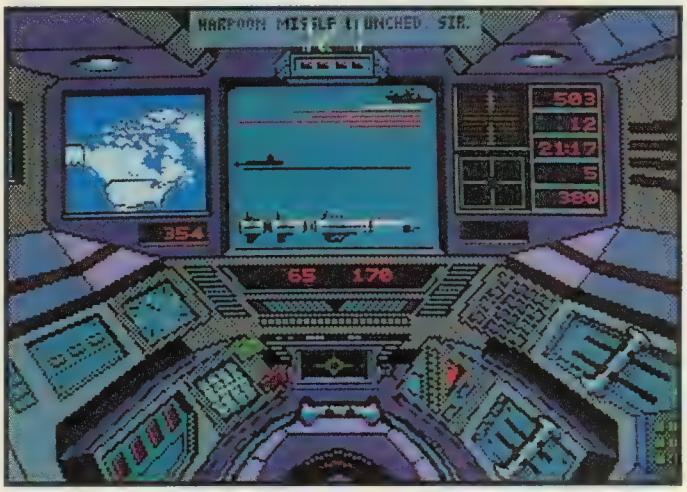
Your active sonar should already be off, and you should turn on silent running and immediately dive to below 500 feet. Without active sonar, the ship's torpedoes won't be able to find you and will either sail by or explode out of your range. When the white line appears on your screen indicating that the Soviet ship is getting close, you can prepare to launch your own missiles.

"Boss Dice" has the same basic rules as poker. But this old salt is an expert player. Definitely keep playing until you earn his bottle of rum, but you may not be able to earn the cash or the electrical device he has to offer.

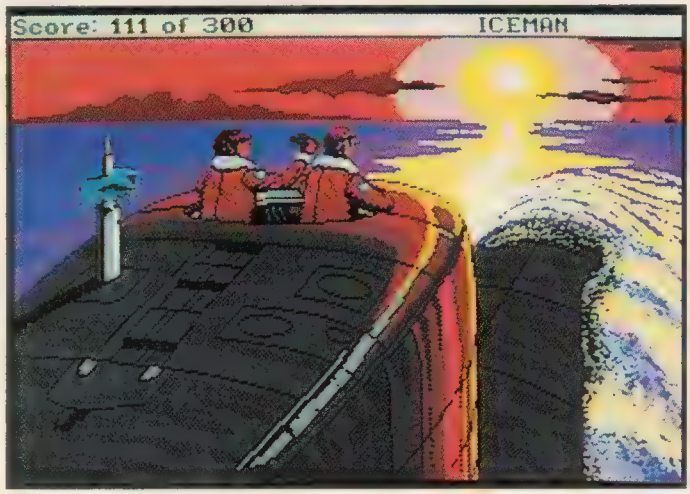
Make sure no enemy torpedoes are close by, then launch a harpoon homing missile. If you then fire a decoy torpedo, you'll pull the next incoming torpedo off your trail. Repeat this twice more, and you'll receive word that the Soviet ship is sinking. No torpedoes already headed for your sub will make impact after the enemy sinks.

But catch your breath quickly. After a brief reprieve, you'll be back at the helm, navigating the sub through an ice field. Your depth is important here — you'll run aground if you go below 200 feet. Stay at five knots and look for a pattern in the icebergs. You'll squeeze between two, then turn hard right or left to avoid three or four more, then squeeze between two more, and so on until you're contacted by the ice station.

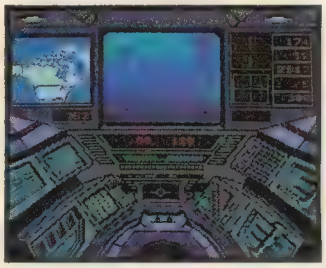
Did you think your trouble would then end? No way. There's a Soviet submarine after you as you round Greenland. And you, unfortunately, used most of your weapons attacking her sister ship. This is one of those times when it pays to retreat. Dive



Patience, patience. Though it may strain your nerves, you've got to wait until the enemy ship gets close to you before you launch your first torpedoes.



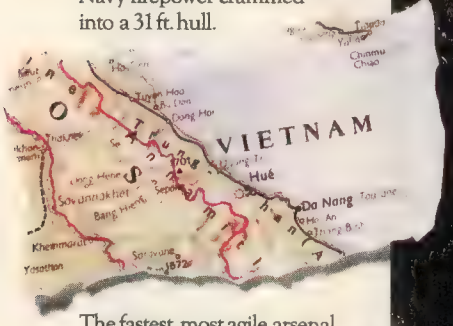
The view from the bridge isn't encouraging. One of those Soviet ships is moving in fast — and the captain doesn't seem to want to discuss glasnost.



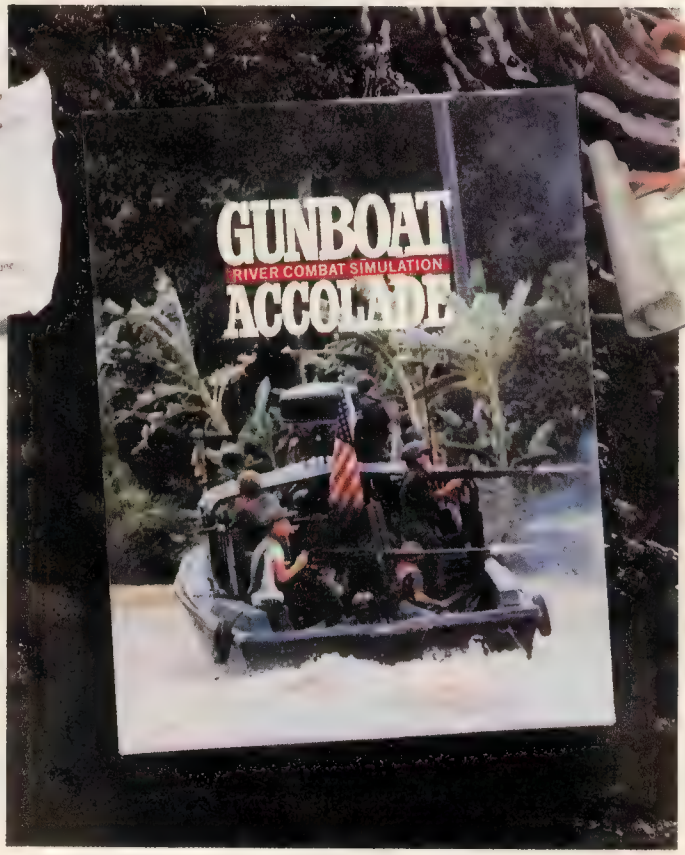
You can't even bask in the glory of your victory over the Soviet ship because there's an iceberg field ahead. There's a definite pattern to the bergs, so save your game before you enter the field, and keep practicing until you earn a perfect navigation score.

Small Craft Warning.

Prepare for a storm. Of bullets. *Gunboat.*™ Eight tons of U.S. Navy firepower crammed into a 31 ft. hull.



The fastest, most agile arsenal ever to turn 29 knots up a jungle river.



Climb aboard an authentically detailed river patrol boat (PBR) and get a 1st-person perspective from 4 battle stations.

Uncoil twin M60 machine guns and grenade launchers on renegade Viet Cong, Panamanian rebels and the murderous Colombian drug cartel.

They're all on the river. Waiting.

Polygon-fill animation and bit-map graphics immerse you in the steamy reality of 3 sweltering combat zones. Twenty missions lie ahead, in countries where the mortar fire is as thick as mosquitoes.

Gunboat. The water's about to get rough.

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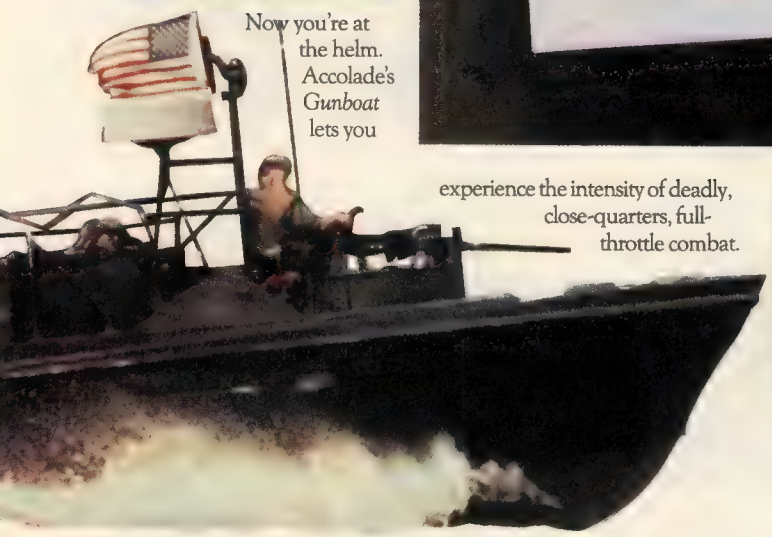

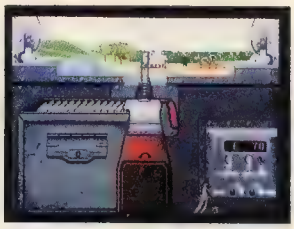

River combat, where an enemy ambush lurks around any bend, up any canyon or by any bridge.

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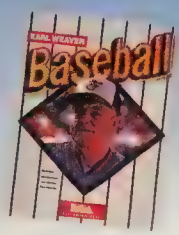

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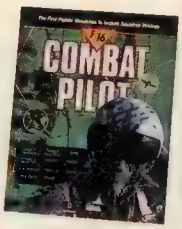

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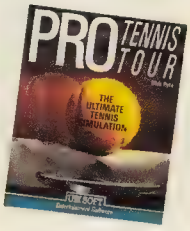

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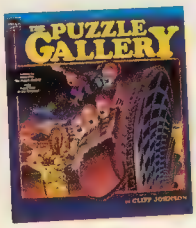

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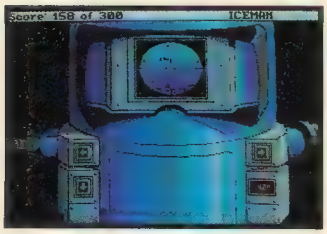


When you're close to Tunisia, the captain will invite you to look through the periscope. Jot down the bearings of the oil rig and harbor, then get the distance to each from the sailor manning the sonar.

until you reach 2,300 feet, and then wait out the enemy. The sub will approach, then retreat. Once it disappears from the sonar screen, it's safe for you to continue your journey.

At long last, you're approaching your rendezvous point with the USS *Coontz*. When you've signaled the ship, you'll want to maneuver through the Strait of Gibraltar under the ship's cover. It's easy enough to get underneath the *Coontz* — just set the sub's wheel straight ahead and keep at five knots and 500 feet below the water's surface.

But once you're in position underneath the *Coontz* (shown as a cross on your screen) you'll have to stay there — and that's when things get tricky because the technical manual is no help at all. The key is to try to keep your speed and depth as steady as possible. The wheel controls the vertical movements of your sub underneath the ship. So when she falls, you turn right. When she rises, turn left.

SOMEBODY'S AMBASSADOR IS MISSING

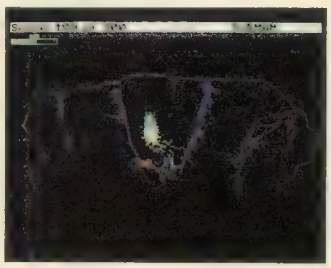
When you've made it through the Strait of Gibraltar, the submarine simulation section of *Iceman* ends and the adventure takes over again. You'll have to sneak into the harbor to contact your fellow agents, but you'd better be properly equipped first.

Find and repair the diving vehicle, locate your scuba gear, then head out into the warm Mediterranean waters. Unless you're a navigation specialist, you're going to have

Now that you're in position to swim to shore and meet your contact, you must make sure your equipment is shipshape. Check the dive vehicle and locate your scuba gear.

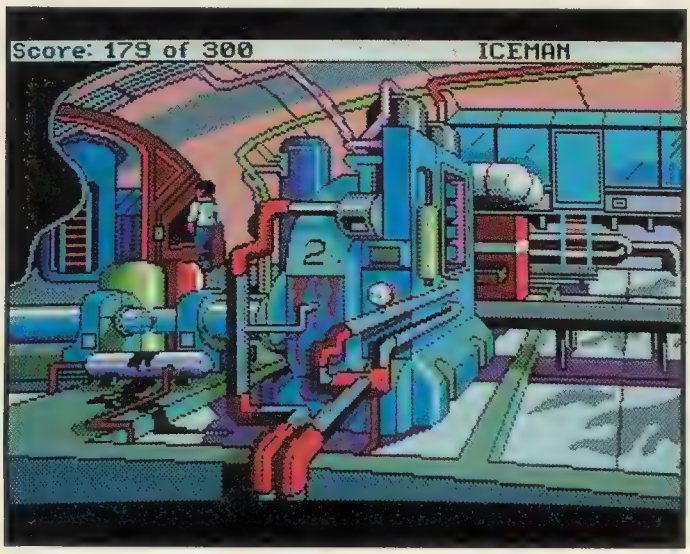
trouble locating the oil rig and the harbor. It's best to think of the ocean as a grid, and to search each screen in order. Both the rig and the harbor are within ten screens to the left and ten screens up after you leave the sub.

If you didn't win the electrical device during your game of "Boss Dice," you'll have to find an alternative route into the harbor. Look for a cave, work your way through it, and then make contact with the fisherman. After all, now that you've survived the submarine, the rest of the mission is a breeze.

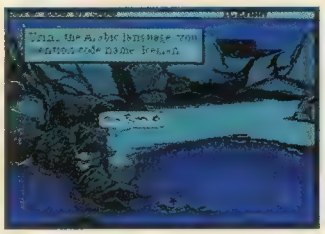


When you're in the cave, your air bubbles will always travel upward. But the debris from a burnt flare will follow the current and lead you to the exit.

It's simple enough to follow the maps that the fisherman and Stacey give you — just remember that you never want to be caught with incriminating evidence on your person. When you reach Stacey's apartment, search for a weapon and plot your entry into the terrorists' headquar-



Locating the oil rig and the harbor is a matter of guesswork unless you're a trained navigator. Divide the ocean into grids and search the ten screens to the left and the ten screens up from your sub.

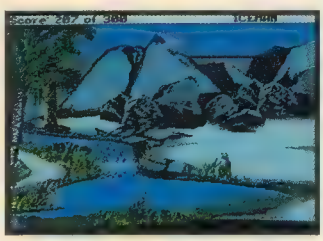


Now that you've set foot on shore, you can make contact with the appointed agent. Just don't forget proper procedure.

ters. It's as simple as making a phone call.

But even after you've rescued the ambassador, there's one final challenge: a race to your escape helicopter through the tortuous curves of a mountain road. It's the only real arcade sequence in *Iceman*, and while it's no "Astro Chicken," it is still difficult enough to pose a final trial to anyone who has survived this long.

But the survivors of this game will really have accomplished something. It's Sierra's toughest adventure, and it's frustrating enough to make you pull out your hair, but by the time John Westland receives his decorations on the deck of an aircraft carrier, you'll have a new respect for the complexities of submarine service. When you finally

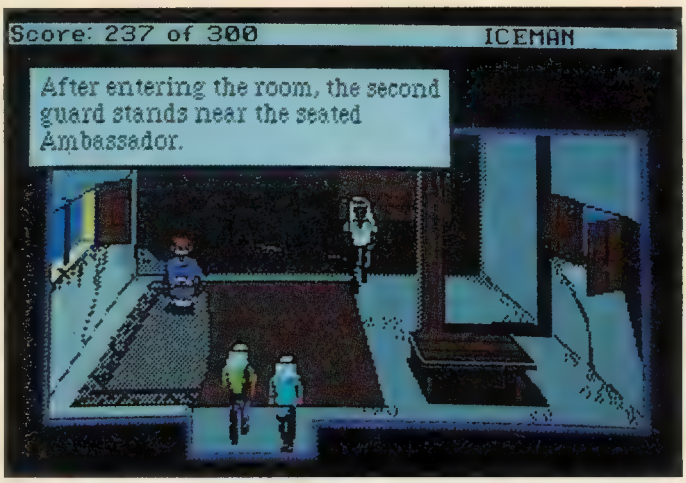


Follow the first agent's map and you'll find this oasis where your second contact is waiting. Hey! Is that a familiar face under all those veils?

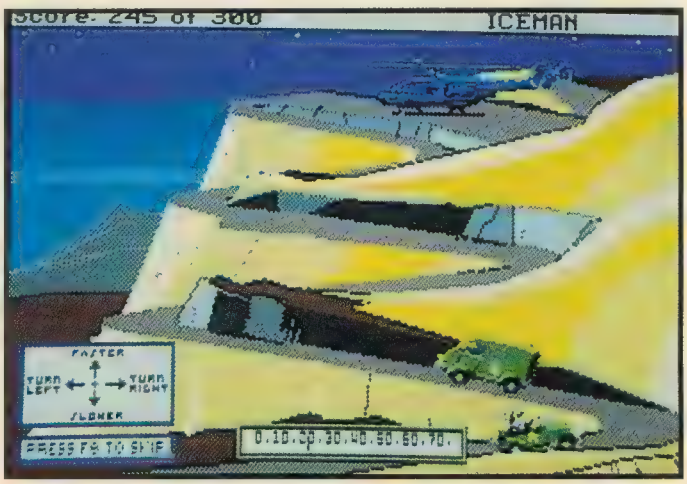
Search Stacey's apartment for any items you might need when you storm the terrorists' headquarters. Then nab the delivery guy and use his clothes for a disguise.

finish *Code Name: Iceman*, you'll either run down to join the Navy, or you'll thank your lucky stars the recruiter was at lunch that time you stopped by.

GP



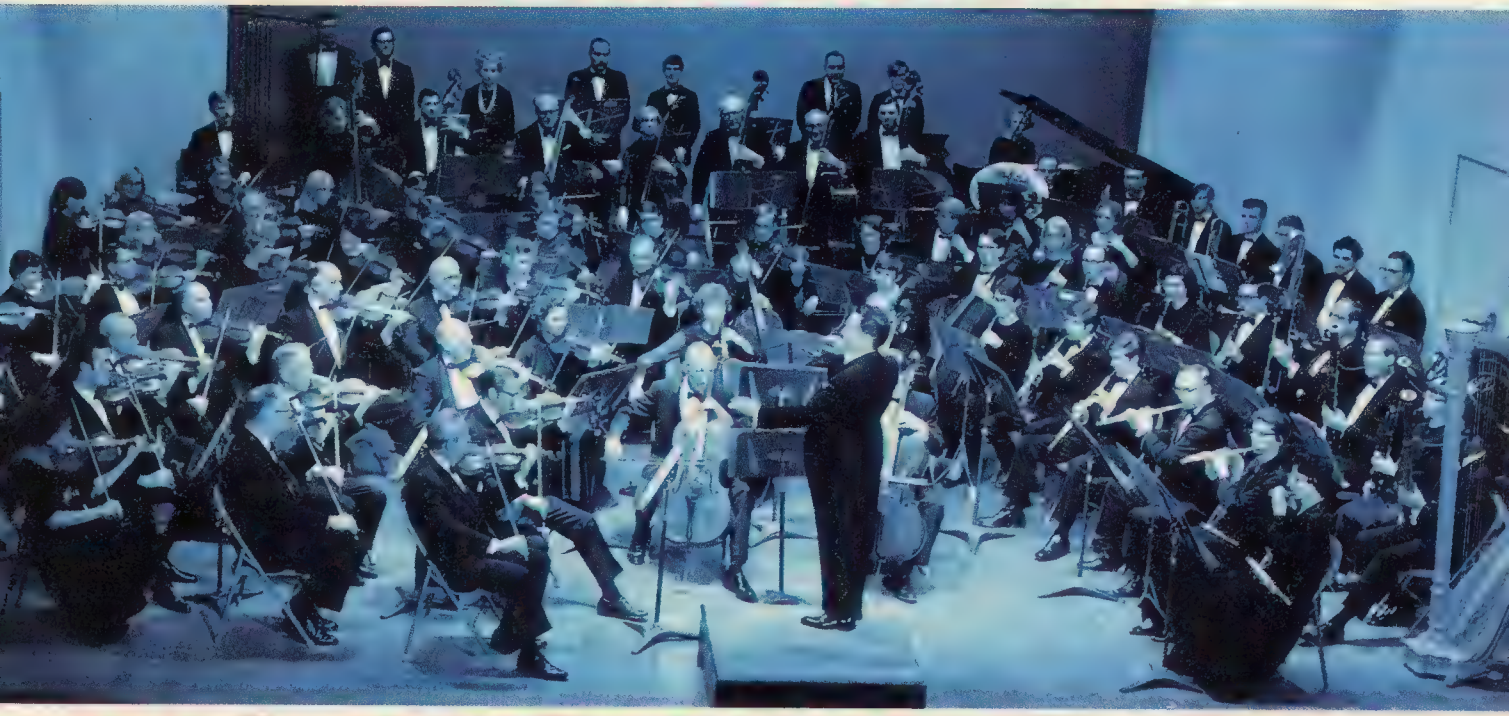
The ambassador seems OK, but neither of you will be safe until you take care of these two terrorists.



Your escape is near, but you won't get to the helicopter unless you can maneuver these winding roads. Is nothing easy for our man, Iceman?

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; joystick and mouse optional; supports sound boards; 8 Mhz computer or faster recommended.

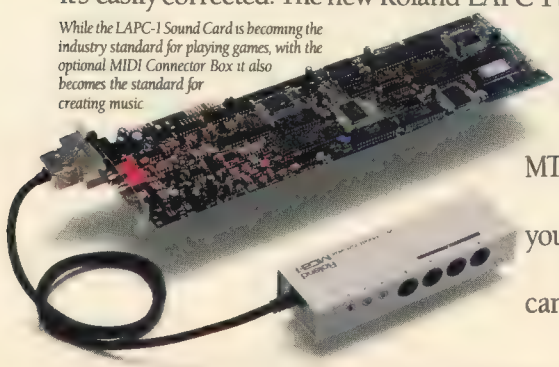
Stick it



in your ear.

For all the sounds you hear when you're playing a game, there are probably as many you don't. Our engineers tell us it isn't so much a reflection on your ears as it is on your computer. They also tell us it's easily corrected. The new Roland LAPC-1 tone generator and intelligent MIDI interface provides IBM-PC and compatible users with a humongous selection of both instrumental and percussion timbres, as well as, and this is the fun part, sound effects–all courtesy of the same legendary L/A Synthesis you'll find on our MT-32 Multi-Timbral Sound Module.

1989 Winner PC Magazine Award for Technical Excellence



While the LAPC-1 Sound Card is becoming the industry standard for playing games, with the optional MIDI Connector Box it also becomes the standard for creating music

There's something else our engineers tell us, namely how quickly you can connect an LAPC-1 to your stereo.

The record is 45 seconds. We think you can beat it.

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System Requirements: IBM-PC/XT/AT or compatible, minimum 256k RAM

Hmm, no wasted time in this scenario! Before you've had a chance to issue a single command, your crew reports a number of enemy contacts. Click on 1:1 time to give yourself room to issue commands.

Harpoon

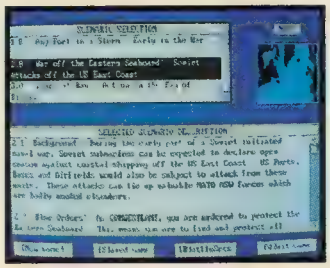
NEIL RANDALL

Potential conflicts between NATO and the Warsaw Pact — or, more specifically, between the U.S. and the USSR — have been big game sellers in recent years. Certainly, nobody actually wanted such conflicts, but in games they have always been interesting, if only to see what happens when the two most money-draining armed forces in world history use the highest of technologies to capture or defend areas of mutual concern.

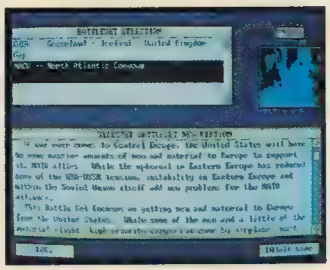
And frankly, the current world situation hasn't changed things much. The game player's interest in a clash between these two superpowers continues to be sparked by two essential developments in the technology of warfare: Nuclear weapons might make the whole exercise academic, and warfare is more impersonal than at any other time in history. No longer do you actually shoot at someone. Instead, you target entire units from a distance.

The role of the individual arms of the forces is another consideration. Land is the ultimate goal, but capturing or defending it requires solid command of both air and sea. Each side must maintain enormous air forces as well as huge, wildly expensive navies. With shipping lanes for both sides (but especially NATO) very long and extremely fragile, navies exist to destroy enemy lanes and protect friendly ones. Supporting ground troops comes into play here as well, and even the air forces are dependent upon ships. Aircraft carriers, after all, carry far more than just tactical fighters.

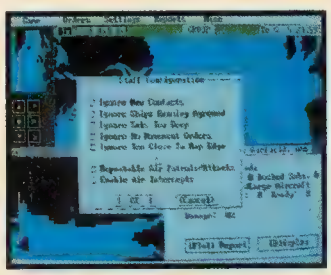
So military systems continue to intrigue, whether or not their use in actual warfare is even a remote possibility. To this end, the games that will suffer most from the breakout of peace in Europe are those whose focus lies in running the bad-guy-commies into the ground or whose basis is action rather than strategy. There will always be room for a well-designed, thoughtfully constructed game that concentrates on the strategy and tactics of a weapons system rather than on the politics of a given conflict situation. Such games might not sell quite as well as before, but they'll sell nevertheless.



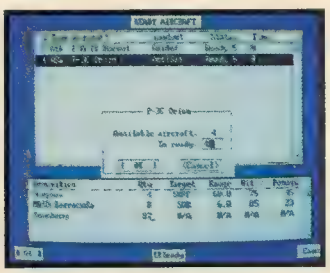
Scenario #2 of the North Atlantic battle set features fighting off the east coast of the U.S. Choosing this scenario brings the war to your own back door — which makes victory seem even more important than it would ordinarily be.



The focus of the North Atlantic Convoys battle set is to transport troops and supplies from North America to Europe. The Allies had trouble with this during WWII, and the Soviet navy is far stronger than the German navy ever was.



This menu lets you tailor the role of your staff to your liking. You'll have to pick up any slack, so in a beginning game you shouldn't let them ignore too many of their duties.



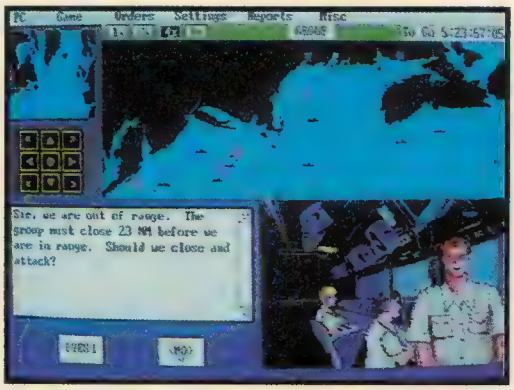
Don't forget to ready your aircraft when you think you're in air range of the enemy. It's always a solid strategy to get rid of any enemy ships before they can reach you.

HAVE WE GOT A NAVAL CONFLICT FOR YOU!

Harpoon is precisely such a

Highlight the enemy group, then choose "Full Report" from the information window. You'll get this sparse but valuable information about the surface fleet west by southwest to your position.

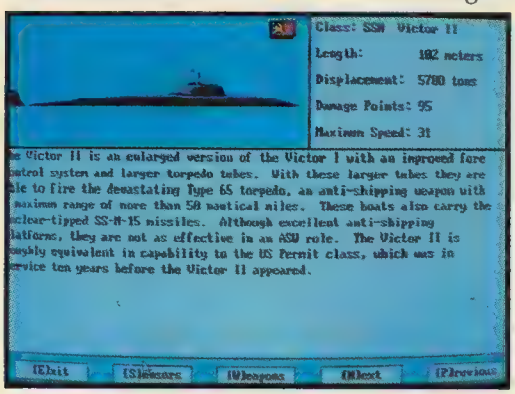
Harpoon is a kinder and gentler game than most. You may have ordered an attack on an out-of-range target, but the game won't chastise you. Instead, your crew will ask if you want to close and attack — clearly what you meant in the first place.



game. Like the board game on which it is based (some of the same designers worked on both), *Harpoon* seeks to simulate what it would be like to command fleets in contemporary naval engagements. It draws on the Cold War face-offs between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, but as a game system it is capable of modeling any contemporary naval situation. In fact, **Three-Sixty** plans to market Battle Sets which include scenarios from different navies around the globe. In other words, *Harpoon* is anything but a "bash-the-Russkies" game. It is a sophisticated, detailed rendering of the very essence of modern naval combat.

All of which would seem to point to a virtually unplayable game. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. With an extremely well-designed system of menus and dialogue boxes, *Harpoon* is every bit as playable as any naval strategy game you're likely to see.

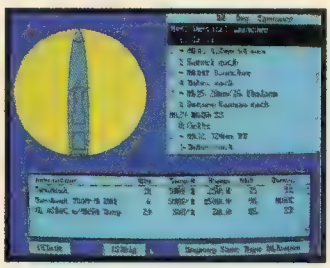
The reason, quite simply, is focus. As in an increasing number of computer war games, *Harpoon* puts you in a specific command role. You control the fleet, leaving the menial tasks to your subordinates. The game allows you to take over some of these details, but you'll have plenty to do without them. After all, maneuvering fleets into interception range of enemy vessels and keeping track of several different groups of ships is more than enough for one person to handle.


Class: SSN Victor II
Length: 102 meters
Displacement: 5780 tons
Damage Points: 95
Maximum Speed: 31
Victor II is an enlarged version of the Victor I with an improved fire control system and larger torpedo tubes. With these larger tubes they are able to fire the devastating Type 65 torpedo, an anti-shipping weapon with a maximum range of more than 50 nautical miles. These boats also carry the nuclear-tipped SS-N-15 missiles. Although excellent anti-shipping platforms, they are not as effective in an ASW role. The Victor II is roughly equivalent in capability to the US Permit class, which was in service ten years before the Victor II appeared.
(Exit
(Sensors
(Weapons
(Next
(Previous

Click on Display to find out details about the Soviets' Victor II class of submarine. From here you can also get a sensors and weapons display which will help you stay out of the range of this vessel.

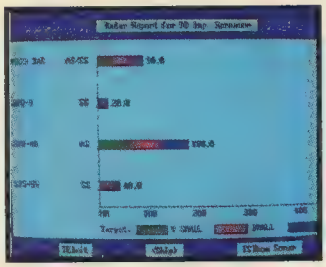
The main *Harpoon* screen is divided into four sections. A small window at top left shows the strategic map. Beside it, occupying the largest single window on the screen, is the group map, which you can view at four different zoom levels. This map is represented by a small rectangle on the strategic map.

The bottom left of the screen is occupied by the unit map (corresponding to a small rectangle on the group map), which allows you to focus upon individual ship groups. Here, too, you have four levels of zoom for increased detail. Finally, the bottom right contains the report window, the main control window for the game. Here you receive information, request information, set courses for your groups, and so on.



The weapons information screen for this ship shows all the available weapons as well as their field of fire. The MK41 missile can obviously be launched in any direction (as shown by the yellow circle), but other weapons are more restricted.

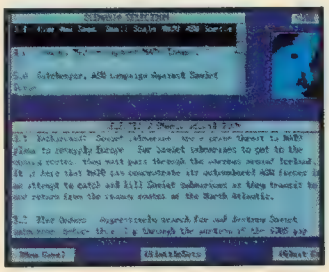
When you begin *Harpoon*,



Learning how to use the sensor reports isn't exactly easy, but you won't get anywhere without doing so. You'll soon depend on these reports for information about the enemy.

Setting your course is a matter of using the mouse to draw new course "legs" on the map. Don't rely on the default courses because all will change as the battle progresses.

a series of screens leads you through scenario selection and setup. First, choose a battle set. One is included with the game — the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom Gap (GIUK) — and Three-Sixty has just released its second battle set, North Atlantic Convoys. Then you select from several play options. You can play either the NATO or the Warsaw Pact



Going back to the battle sets screen, click on the GIUK set, then choose scenario 3. As its name suggests, this battle is a small one, dependent on maneuver rather than force.

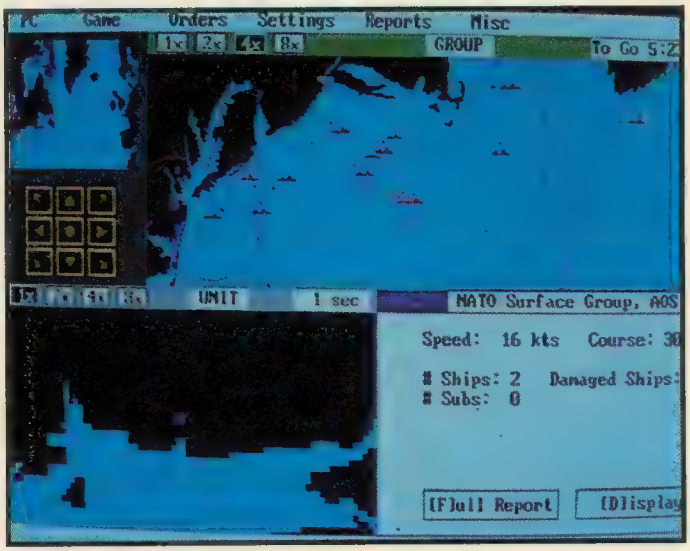
side (other combatants will be available in future modules), and you can activate or deactivate five different options.

Possible Nuclear Release brings nuclear weapons into the picture, demanding different strategies and tactics from you. The Snorkeling Submarines option lets you detect diesel subs more easily with radar and sensors, though your subs will be detected just as easily. Realistic Weather introduces a wealth of tactical complications, while Normal Maintenance Failures forces you to realize that Murphy's Law is not just a land statute. Finally, Start With Full Ordinance lets you decide whether or not to play under realistic logistics conditions, in which you can easily enter battle without crucial weapons and supplies.

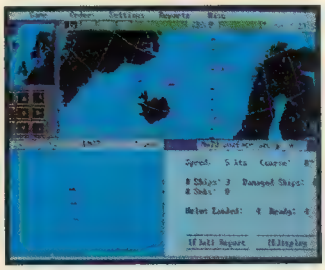
From here it's on to the specific scenarios. The first three in the GIUK battle set, Dawn Patrol, Gauntlet, and Hide and Seek, are small and easily played; they act as introductions to the game. The next three are more complex, with additional ships and aircraft. The last six (there are 12 in all) are difficult, and you should know the game well before attempting them. Check the scenario window for background information on any of these, as well as for your orders and a number of suggestions.

TAKING THE HELM

Once the game begins, you're faced with a bar consisting of five menus: game, setting, reports, orders, and miscellaneous. The game menu lets you pause the game, start a new one, save or load games, and track your progress. From the setting menu you can choose several game options, mostly deciding which animations you wish to see on screen



By adjusting the set range circles menu, you can see the effective range of certain weapons and radar. This kind of display can be of immense help in choosing your plan of attack.



Your two surface groups begin the scenario just north of Iceland. The circles show your effective weapons range.

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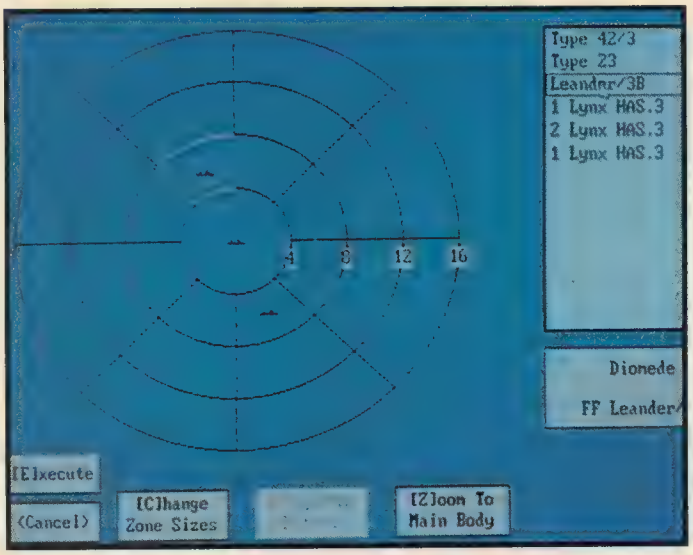
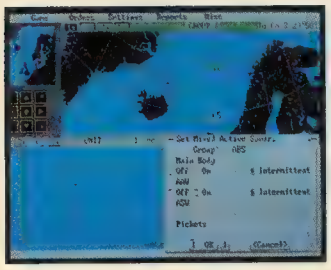


Harpoon *even lets you edit the formations of your task groups. Doing so allows you to use your own tactical knowledge to fight battles.*



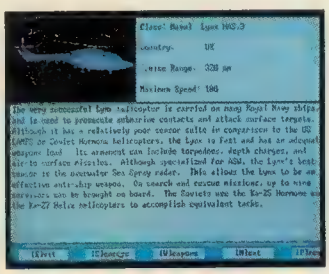
Working your sensors to their best advantage is vital in this game. Here you should choose intermittent, which will help you find subs and warn you of approaching weapons, but which won't give away your position.

(they're colorful, but time consuming). From here you also choose your staff options (letting you control how much the staff does on its own) and useful items such as time compression (anything from realtime to highly compressed). The reports menu offers a wide range of reports.

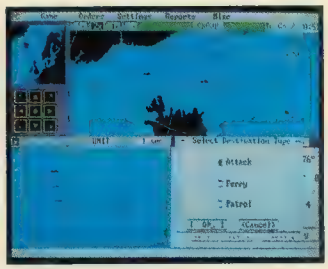
As you might expect, the heart of the game is the orders menu. Here, you order your men to attack enemy groups; you activate sensors and radar; you join groups together and split them apart; and you ready and then launch available aircraft. You can also set the course of each group from the orders menu (including the speed and "legs" of the course) and set the altitude of aircraft and the depth of submarines. You can even edit the formation of the group as you see fit, thereby adopting unique tactics according to individual situations.

Surprisingly, none of this is hard to do. The manual comes with detailed strategic notes, and an accompanying booklet gives you tactical "do's" and "don't's." The best way to learn what's going on, though, is simply to jump in and play the game. Your staff lets you know when you've achieved contact with the enemy, and in many cases a dialogue box lets you close in and attack without having to do any real menu manipulation.

Dialogue boxes even control the time compression, so you can opt for top speed at all times, knowing that battle will slow things down anyway. You should speed up the game until first contact is reported, then choose a group on the map and change its course to move it toward that contact. Once you're in range, order the attack. A few times through the first scenario should give you all the experience you need.

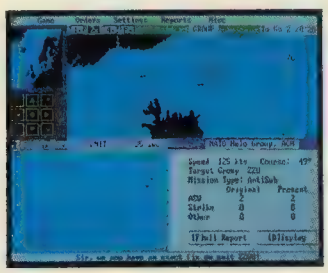


This screen shows information about the Lynx helicopter. The important issues are its range and its speed. Both are fairly good, but you need to be closer to maximize your chances.



Once you've spotted a contact, check your range and launch your aircraft. The aircraft can help you eliminate the enemy as quickly as possible.

Harpoon is a strong game, but its strongest point may well be its supremely attractive information displays. At any point in game play, you can ask for information about a class of ship or aircraft, and the request yields some highly informative and graphically detailed screens. You can get an overhead or side view of the ship type so that you can check



The information screen at the bottom right shows that your helicopters have zeroed in on a submarine. Since you've already ordered the attack, they'll do the best they can.

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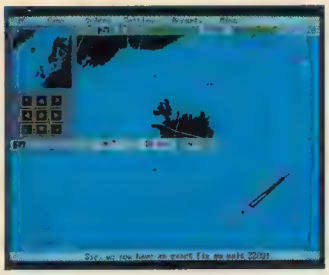
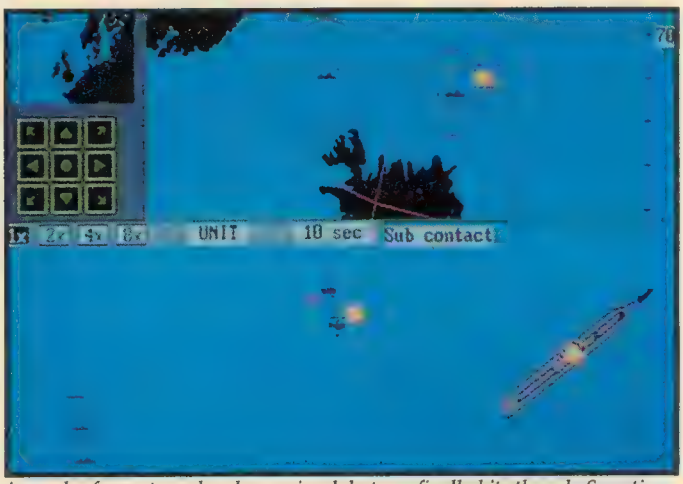


Now that you've found an Akula-class Soviet attack submarine, it's time to try a torpedo. The last thing you want is to tangle with this thing.

its sensor and weapons systems. After playing even one scenario of *Harpoon*, you'll know more about modern naval warfare than you probably ever wanted to know — and there seems no end to the information available. Each weapons system, to cite just one detail, is graphically displayed according to its field of fire out from the ship. Other displays offer similar specifics.

As a simulation, *Harpoon* is absorbing. It's also fairly slow. If you want to know what modern naval military systems are all about, here's your starting point. And if the system progresses as Three-Sixty clearly intends, you're bound to learn a great deal more — even if there is no longer a threat of war between Us and Them.

GP



A couple of your torpedoes have missed, but one finally hits the sub. Sometimes getting a hit requires more luck than skill, but take it however you can get it.

Whoops. Don't be so concerned with beating up on the sub that you forget the sub can just as easily beat you. It won't be easy to evade these two approaching torpedoes.

Evasion tactics have brought you within range of a Kilo-class diesel sub. A couple of shots can send it to the bottom of the sea — once and for all.

Finally all three subs are destroyed. That means victory for you and your crew. Nice work for a beginner, but soon the scenarios get much, much harder.

Hardware requirements: 640K; VGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; mouse recommended; supports sound boards.

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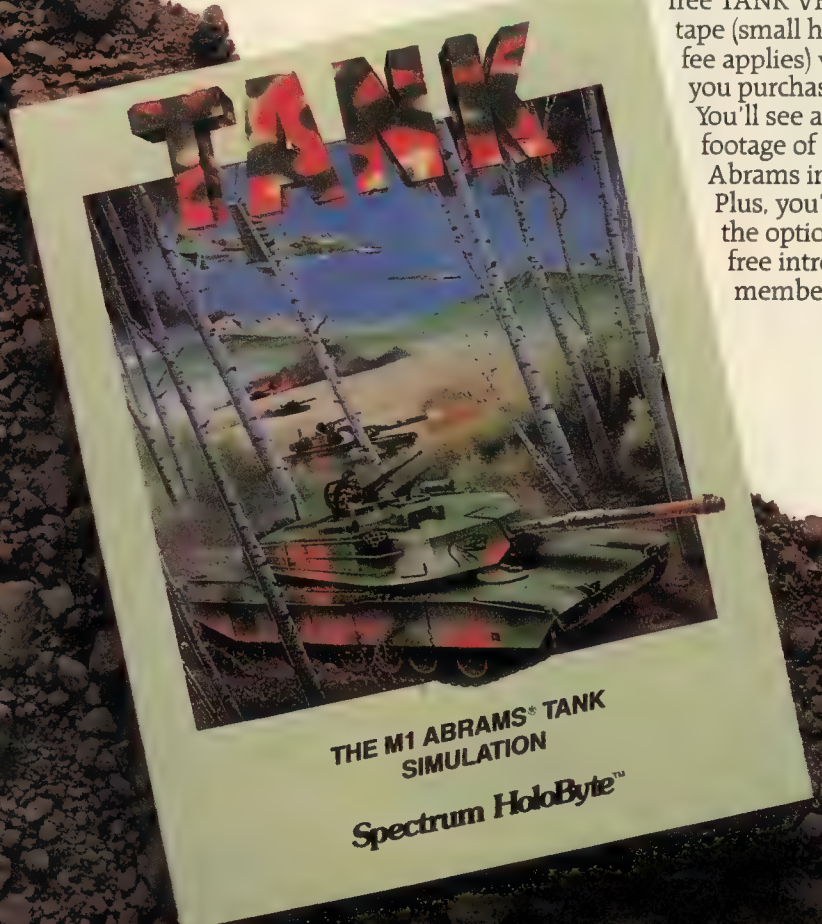

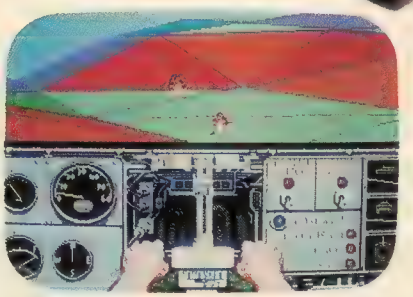

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When Ultima VI *opens, you're in your home on earth. As you click through the multitude of mindless TV programs, you realize how much you miss the adventure-filled days of your quests in Britannia.*

Ultima VI: The False Prophet

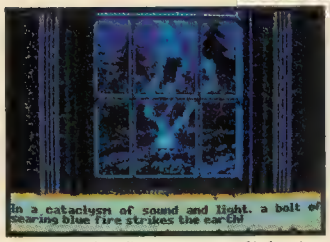
NEIL RANDALL

The *Ultima* series holds something of a mystique among computer gamers. From its introduction in the early 80s, *Ultima* has been known as a fantasy series to be played only by those who knew their way around fantasy games. In other words: Only experts need apply. Whether or not the games were really that difficult didn't matter. The perception was there, and that was all that counted.

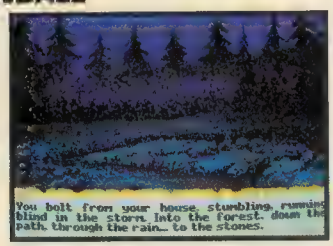
Part of the reputation was deserved. *Ultima III* was an extremely long game, and casting magic spells in it was more difficult than the gaming world had seen. But beginning with *Ultima IV*, series designer Richard Garriott (Lord British himself) introduced an innovative character-creation system in which players were asked to solve a set of dilemmas that would determine the personality of their characters.

Ultima V demonstrated how complex Garriott could make his well-honed game system, and many players are still trying to reach the end of that highly challenging quest.

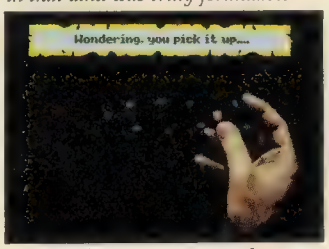
Now *Ultima VI* has been released, and this most recent game in the series tries to do two things. First, it breaks free from the series' programming dependence on the Apple II line of computers, which limited the memory and graphics of the adventures. Second, it aims for dramatically increased playability. As long as he was rethinking his programming, Garriott decided to change some of the interface as well. *Ultima VI* is almost completely playable with a mouse, and some of the early tried-and-true *Ultima* command structure is gone. In its place is an interface more easily learned than those in the first five *Ultimas*.



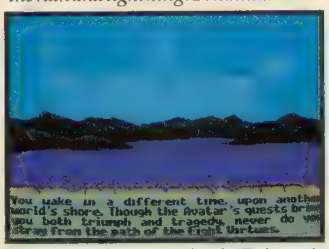
During the fierce storm, lightning touches the ground. This, too, reminds you of Britannia. The power of nature in that land was truly formidable.


You bolt from your house, stumbling, running blind in the storm. Into the forest, down the path, through the rain... to the stones.

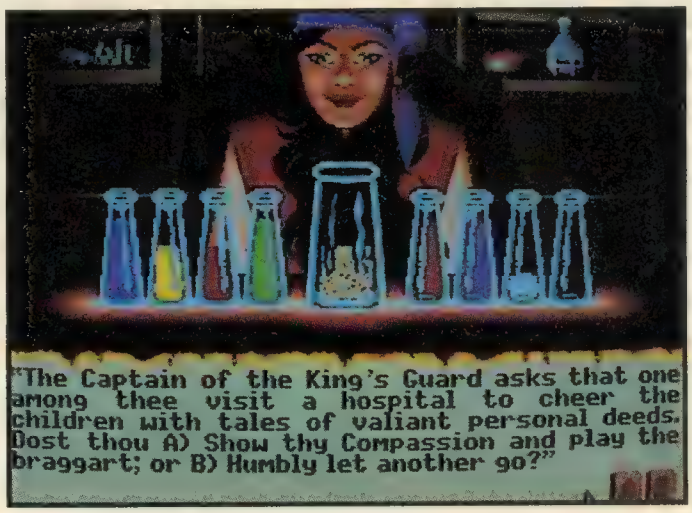
The storm has called you, and you have answered. You run toward the stones outside your house, braving the rain and lightning. Britannia calls.



A mysterious stone appears from outside the stone circle. You take it, wondering what it has to do with the storm, the circle, or your calling.


You wake in a different time, upon another world's shore. Though the Avatar's quests br... you both triumph and tragedy, never do yo... stray from the path of the Eight Virtues.

No sooner do you arrive in Britannia than you encounter danger. Did you think you would actually be able to begin a quest so soon?


"The Captain of the King's Guard asks that one among thee visit a hospital to cheer the children with tales of valiant personal deeds. Dost thou A) Show thy Compassion and play the braggart; or B) Humbly let another go?"

The red door was a portal to Britannia. And now your character must face the gypsy's questions. Your traits are decided by how you answer her ethical dilemmas, but you have no way of knowing how the choices affect you until you play the game.

BEHIND THE RED MOONGATE

When you begin *Ultima VI*, you are taken through a series of beautifully drawn screens (especially in the VGA version) leading you from this world into the land of Britannia. Along the way, you'll find yourself in a gypsy hut, giving the answers to several ethical dilemmas to determine your character's personality. Don't try to second-guess the computer here — there's rarely a right or wrong answer to the questions. Simply answer as your character would, and you'll have done your job.

Once past character creation, the introduction shows

As you're about to become the victim of a cruel sacrifice, you begin to wonder how much worse this adventure can get.

several screens which advance the story. Listen carefully to learn the central story of *Ultima VI*, the threat of the gargoyles. Finally, leap through a red moongate (the most powerful form of travel in Britannia) and find yourself standing with three friends in the throne room of a castle. Lord British himself is waiting to answer your questions.

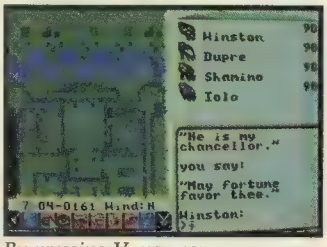
By talking to Lord British, you learn of the danger facing Britannia. He links your new quest to those of *Ultima IV* and *V*, but it's not necessary to have played those games to play this one. After you've answered his questions, talk to the mage and the guard who stand with Lord British. The guard offers advice on where you should go, and the mage offers an important clue you'll need to succeed in this game — there's something you brought with you from your own world that you'll need in the course of your quest. Lord British will explain the item's significance.

Lord British
"They have been coming up through the dungeons."
"Thus far they have mainly been attacking the shrines of the eight virtues."
7-04-0161 Mind:N

By talking to Lord British, you determine the purpose of your quest. Type in the words that appear in red when you're asked to say something. You'll get more information this way.

As with all the elements of the interface, there are two ways to talk to a character. The first is to click on the Talk icon, listed on the line of command icons at the bottom of the screen, then click on the character with whom you wish to converse. The second way is to type T, then press the directional key that points to the character. Some people respond automatically, but others need prompting. Try typing Name and Job to get them started. Often, these prompts yield several words which appear in a different color from the rest. Typing these words in turn results in new information, since the characters are usually eager to talk about them.

Lord British also explains that you are free to use anything you find in his castle. He means it, so take advantage of the offer. He has even set aside



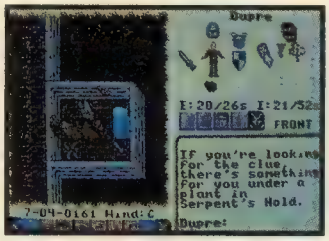
By pressing V, you can see an overhead map of the immediate vicinity. The small white square in the middle of the screen represents you, here in conference with Lord British. Use this view often, if only to find buildings off your main path.

Collect chests and bags whenever you can. They're heavy, but they're easier to carry than a lot of individual items. Inside Lord British's room, check to see what's inside this bag — if you're lucky, you'll get some objects necessary for casting spells.

a room for you through the doors to the west of the throne room door. Inside this room is a wealth of useful items, including a sack of magical reagents and a chest with a weapon, a shield, and other items. Take the spell book as well; you'll need it later. And don't forget that the other members of the party can carry items as well.

COMMAND AND DELIVER

Getting through the door demands the first of many applications of the versatile Use command. Stand in front of the door, click on Use, and then click on the door. Or type U and press the appropriate directional key. The door will open unless it is locked, in which case you must first use a key on it. Click Use, click on the key in your inventory, and then click on the door — or type U, press the Tab key to get to your inventory, press the arrow keys to get to the key,



Just down the hall is a room with a chest. Check inside it for an important clue. Of course, you still have to journey to the Serpent's Hold, but you'd have to do that anyway.

press Return, and then use the appropriate arrow key to point to the door.

Ultima VI's Use command is your way of opening and unlocking doors and chests, climbing up or down ladders, mounting and dismounting horses, entering and exiting ships, lighting torches, and making use of any special item you may be carrying. You should make an effort to understand its implementation early.

Another essential command icon is Get. When you find an item you want, click on Get and then on the item you wish to pick up. Or type G and use the appropriate arrow key. If there's an item in a pile you don't want, click on the Move icon (or type M), then on the item itself. Respond to the

Throughout Ultima VI, *you encounter characters of many descriptions. This jester promises a clue, but bear in mind that the guy tells jokes for a living. Beggars are rarely more helpful.*

"Move where?" question by clicking on a location on the display, or by pressing the arrow key in the direction you want to move the object. Note that you can also push people aside with the Move command, but some of them might not like rough treatment.

Once you find your sword and shield, you must ready them. Search through your goods by clicking the inventory button on the status display (or pressing Tab), then click on the sword and the shield to make them ready (or move the cursor to each item and press Return). To unready them later — if you want to use a torch instead, for example — click on them again. Note that you must ready spell books and other items before using them as well as weaponry.

Now that you've found weapons and shields that you like, it's time to consider climbing down into the castle's lower levels. Be sure you have a torch, though — you'll need it.

Controlling your inventory is important. You can only carry so much, and the more you carry, the slower you go and the more tired you get. Besides, you have a limited number of slots in which you can place items. You can free up slots by Moving items inside chests or bags, or by Moving them to other characters. To do the latter, click on the Move icon, click again on the item to be moved, and then on the character on the action display.

For the most part, the command line refers to you, not to the other characters in the party. There are times, though, when you want direct control over the other characters. Sometimes, for instance, you'll want someone else in the party to pick up an item. Other times, it will be necessary to move a character out of your way. Gaining this control means moving into solo mode, and is accessed by using the number keys on the top row of the keyboard. Press 1 to have your character act on his or her own. Press 2 to control the second character, 3 for the third, and so on.

While in solo mode, no other character can do anything, so make sure to switch back to party mode when you're finished by pressing 0 (zero). Interestingly enough, you can't enter ships or ascend or descend ladders in the solo mode. If you did, you could split up the party irrevocably.

Down on the third level, there's a walkway leading to a small island where a skiff awaits your commands. Use it to cross the water if you're ready to take the risk.

You've managed to sail the skiff to a small island in the middle of an underground lake. Take the ladder you see down to yet another level.

Crossing a walkway on the third underground level, the party encounters a cyclops and his minions. This is the first serious test in combat, but large rewards are waiting.

After the battle with the cyclops, the floor is littered with corpses and weapons. Spears and throwing axes are there for the taking — and selling.

You can rest for the night to regain strength while in the wilderness. Be sure to post a guard, though, or you might be killed before awakening.

THEY'RE BACK!

ON A COMPUTER NEAR YOU

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MASTERTRONIC

AN EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO BRITANNIA

Once you've left the throne room, it's time to do some exploring. Across the hall from your room is Lord British's chamber. Like your own room, it contains handy items, and you won't be penalized for taking them. While you're there, use the telescope. It won't tell you much (at this point in the game, anyway), but it demonstrates the game's enormous commitment to detail. Then it's off westward and southward down the halls to other rooms. In the southwest corner of the castle you'll find a ladder leading down, but don't use it yet. You have other things to find first.

By placing the orb of the moons in the right location, Winston causes a red moongate to appear. When he steps through it, he will be ... well, why not try it?

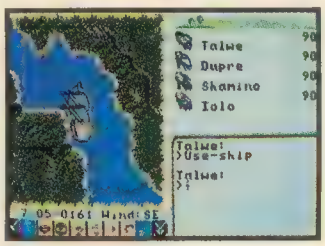
There's an intriguing barracks to the east of the main entryway — and a mysterious locked door as well. You can still look around by clicking on the Look icon (or typing L) and then on the item you want to search (a night table, maybe?). When you've found the key, go on through the door. Then search all the chests — you may as well use the best arms and armor you can. Remember, anything you find is yours for the taking. You won't be accused of stealing until after you leave the castle.

The red moongate has led to this mysterious place in the mountains. A guardian stands watch over the pass.

The horses you find at the blacksmith's help you journey faster and easier. But they cost a great deal of money — and stealing is not a recommended action.

You need a ship to take you to many locations in the game. But a ship's deed is required to use a ship, and only a shipwright has one.

With the ship's deed in hand, your party prepares to embark on a journey across the water. Its destination is the Lycaeum, but you'll find other adventures before you arrive.

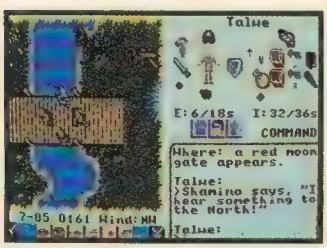


Here on the high seas, the ship is in danger of an attack from a giant squid and two sea serpents. It may not be a desperate fight, but it will certainly be difficult.

Navigate carefully as you sail up this river. North of here, you might be able to find a fighter willing to join the expedition. Short of that, you need to find food and — if you're lucky — gold.

Finally, it's time to head down one of the ladders. Face the ladder, click on Use, then on the ladder itself. The party descends and the scene shifts. Unready your shield and use a torch (there are some in a chest) to brighten up the picture. Then explore the sewers, making maps as you go. When you find a ladder leading down, take it and be prepared for adventure. Down here, you find a few cyclops, headlesses, and trolls to fight — as well as a depressing number of rats and mice.

Your goal is to find a ladder leading to the third level. Once there, you can spot a skiff attached to a dock. Use the skiff to float across the water to a small island on which is another ladder, this one leading to the fourth level. Once you've descended, there's a great deal to do, and substantial rewards to be earned.



Two trolls wait for you across the bridge. A sign is pointing to your next destination, but the trolls must be defeated first. Just hope they have treasure.

Inevitably, you're going to enter combat. Your character can attack in any mode (just click on the Attack icon or type A), but to ready the other members of the party you must click on the Begin Combat icon (or type B). Before you enter combat, set each character's combat mode from the inventory display. It's possible to take control over each character in combat, but for the most part you won't want to. The computer controls them ably, and you have enough to do maneuvering your own character. Remember that different weapons have different effects, though, and that magic is always possible.

Using magic is an art in itself. You throw spells with the Cast icon, either in or out of combat, but you must have the required number of magic points and the right mix of magical reagents. You also need a readied spell book. You won't have a lot of use for magic early in the game, but learn how to cast spells anyway. You'll need them soon enough.

Your party has stumbled on some guards fighting a trio of headlesses. This fight should be easy, and maybe the guards will want to join your adventurers.

In the north of Britannia, you find a group of gargoyles. This early in the game, the gargoyles are too strong for your party. Your best bet is to find an alternate route.

Eventually, you'll find your way out of the dungeons and back into the castle proper. Rest and eat, then head into the town of Britain. If you have enough money, buy some horses or obtain a deed for a ship. Far to the east is Verity Isle, on which rests the great Lycaeum. Here you can find vital information and important people with whom to talk. If you have horses, you can cover distances quickly and find a few new members for your party.

Britannia is big, its inhabitants are varied, and the number of things to accomplish is enormous. Since there is no prescribed order in which to take them on, you can feel free to explore. You should be prepared to spend hours scouting around, however, because, like all the *Ultimas*, this sixth edition is anything but quick. But *unlike* the earlier ones, it is quite easy to play and even better to look at. Just remember that Control-S saves the game and that the moongates take you to other fascinating lands. That information and a little luck is all you'll need to finish this fine, fine game.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; hard disk optional but recommended; 10 MHz or faster computer recommended; mouse optional; supports sound boards.

THE DESKTOP GENERAL

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

PAPA DON'T ALLOW NO ARCADE GAMES 'ROUND HERE (WITH A FEW SPLENDID EXCEPTIONS...)

Cabal *works well because it handles like a game that was designed for a PC joystick, not converted from the more precise and robust Nintendo control unit.*

Most of the games mentioned in this column will be either military hardware simulations (mostly high-tech; when will *somebody* give us a basic, easy to use World War II tank simulator?) or strategy games of some depth and complexity. But not this time.

Sometimes it's a pleasure to put aside the 120-page manuals and the keyboard overlays with their 1,001 commands and spend a little time with a simple, shoot-em-up arcade game. You can just put your brain in park, plug in the old joystick, and let 'er rip. A good 20-minute session of firepower — if rewarded by a decent score — cleanses the mental palate, relaxes your nerve circuits, and leaves you refreshed for whatever comes next. And luckily, there are some — though not that many — good PC arcade games.

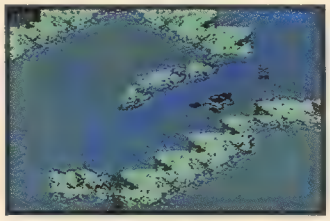
Thinking back on it, the first war game of any kind I ever played on a machine was an arcade game during a family vacation at Daytona Beach in 1953. An amusement arcade on the boardwalk was full of wonderfully garish Gottlieb pinball machines, hand-cranked peepshows with titles like "What the Butler Saw," Skee-Ball alleys sprinkled with real sawdust, and — most marvelous of all to my ten-year-old eyes — a row of coin-operated machine guns.

They must have been coin-op conversions of old antiaircraft training devices: a simulated life-size machine gun with two-handed grips mounted on a pedestal, which fired bullets of light at little Messerschmitts and Zeros that were projected onto a screen about six feet from the muzzle. It cost a nickel for a four-minute turn. The gun made a great "rat-a-tat-tat" noise, and when you hit the flashing planes, bells went off and the target turned red and tumbled off the screen.

Subconsciously, I suppose, I've compared every arcade shooter since then to that wonderful antique machine of long ago, and most of them just don't make the grade.

The best arcade games offer their players a sensory warp in which nothing exists except you and the screen. The control device becomes an extension of your own hands, muscles, and will. Any afficionado of tank warfare probably has fond memories of *Battlezone*, a 3-D arcade shooter which provided such an intense experience that it ended up influencing a number of contemporary computer simulations.

Unfortunately, there are just not that many good arcade shooters available for PCs, and many of those that are on the market have had their design philosophy shaped ("warped"



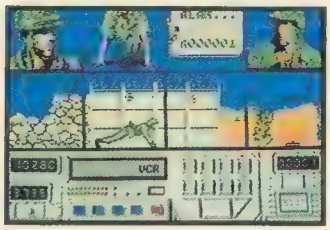
MicroProse's Airborne Ranger *offers arcade action and realistic small-unit tactics in a single extremely playable package.*

might be a better word) by the phenomenal success of two contemporary phenomena: shopping mall arcades and Nintendo.

Since many game manufacturers now design their products with arcades and NES in mind, the two mediums have effectively become symbiotic — a game that gobbles quarters down at the mall will probably sell a million copies as a Nintendo cartridge.

Now, the philosophy of most contemporary arcade hits is simple: You need to offer the *illusion* that success is possible — if you play long enough, hard enough, and with fast enough reflexes — so that players will keep squandering their quarters or keep plugging themselves into their Nintendo decks, hour after glassy-eyed hour. Never mind that only someone with the hand-eye coordination of a brain surgeon and the stamina of a Clydesdale stands even the faintest chance of beating some of these games.

But even in an arcade game, most war gamers want a reasonable facsimile of



Included in Combat Course *— at no extra charge — is a demanding and vociferous drill sergeant.*

authenticity, even if the realism is manifested only on the level of a good comic book. Games in which a single vehicle or Rambo-esque superwarrior, loaded with approximately 5,000 tons of ammunition, is pitted against endless waves of attackers — games in which nothing matters except the

Heavy Metal, *though in some ways a fairly silly game, has its pleasures if you're in the mood for an arcade shooter.*

quickness of your reflexes and the durability of your thumb — are more irritating than entertaining.

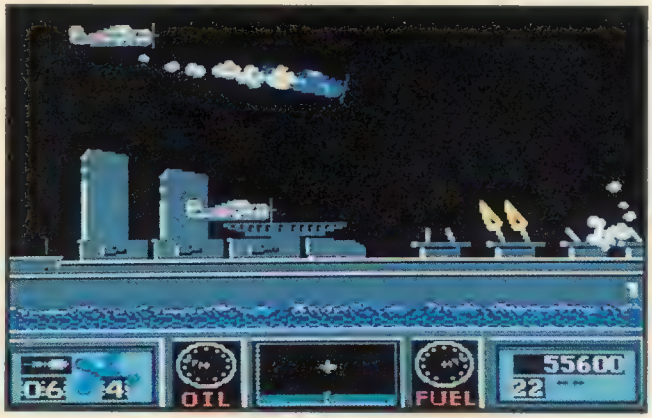
So, though you may need to search the shelves for good PC arcade games (and you really should stay away from PC games that were originally Nintendo games), some can be recommended. What keeps the field from being totally bleak are the arcade shooters which seem designed with the PC's nature in mind; which provide a just-one-more-time challenge without being impossible for anyone older than 16; and which, at their best, offer at least an echo of the simple-minded fun I had with that old machine gun game at Daytona Beach:

•**Airborne Ranger** (MicroProse): This one stradles the border between a small-unit tactical simulation and an arcade game. There's a nice variety of missions — some requiring more stealth than firepower — with superior animation and graphics. An intelligent and enormously satisfying game. Difficulty level: Moderate to hard, depending on the mission.

•**Cabal** (Capcom): A super-soldier blasts his way through screen after screen of enemy tanks and infantry. This is a very Nintendo-ish shooter, but it feels right for the PC, has decent graphics, and in a primitive sort of way is loads of fun. Difficulty level: Very high.

•**Combat Course** (Mindscape): Though having an animated drill sergeant yell at you to drop and give him ten may not be everybody's idea of a good time, this obstacle course program is clever and refreshingly off-beat. Difficulty level: High.

•**Heavy Metal** (Access): This masquerades as a strategy game, but it's almost pure arcade shoot-and-scoot. You've got several different vehicles to control, and good animation and fire-effects. In some ways it is a pretty silly game, but it's still entertaining if you're in the mood. Difficulty level: Depends on what shape you're in, Thunder-Thumbs.



Wings of Fury, *new from Broderbund, is one of the best PC-friendly arcade shooters ever marketed. Superb animation and graphics!*

•**Wings of Fury** (Broderbund): A fine new game which pits you, as the pilot of three carrier-borne Hellcats, against fortified Pacific islands, Japanese warships, and waves of attacking torpedo bombers and Zeros. OK, so it's a bit far-fetched to let the Hellcats carry as many bombs as a B-17, but the graphics are superb, the planes handle smoothly even with keyboard control, and the low-level bombing/strafing runs are exciting as all get-out. Difficulty level: Hard, but reasonable.

So if you're fatigued from trying to match wits with Napoleon or figuring out a workable long-term strategy for reviving the Byzantine Empire, you can plug into any of these games and give those brain cells a rest.

Good shooting, soldier!

GP

ALTERNATE LIVES

NEIL RANDALL

...WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE

In mystery fiction, the star is the *plot*. In fantasy fiction, the star is the *quest*. In science fiction, the star is the *idea*.

Certainly, that's the traditional way of looking at the three genres. And for a time, this formula was quite sound. Look at Agatha Christie. Look at J.R.R. Tolkien. And look at the wealth of science fiction classics in the first half of this century. From A-Z, idea dominated.

Like all formulas, though, this one goes only so far. In many circles the very phrase "science fiction" is taboo — many want s-f to mean "speculative fiction" instead. But if you change the meaning, scientific *ideas* no longer dominate; in their place are (presumably) science-based *speculations*. The only thing that hasn't changed is that the future is nearly always the subject.

The other major change is the attempted merging of s-f with other genres. Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun* is labeled "science fantasy," and other mergers include s-f mysteries, s-f thrillers, and s-f horror stories. Then, too, we have the "serious" s-f, perpetrated by the likes of Ursula K. LeGuin, Margaret Atwood, and, recently, Poul Anderson. In many of these mergers, plot, character, even setting (Stanislav Lem's *Solaris*, for example) has taken idea's role on center stage.

All of which brings us to science fiction role-playing games. The pre-computer popularity of sci-fi RPGs stems from a system called *Traveler*, which began in the mid-70s by Game Designer's Workshop and is still running today. The granddaddy of all sci-fi RPGs, though, is the cult television series "Star Trek," in which character definitely superceded idea. What's interesting, given these two precursors, is that computer science fiction RPGs come much closer to *Traveler* than to "Star Trek." And that most popular of science fiction films, *Star Wars*, rarely enters the arena directly, owing more to Greek myth than futuristic ideas.

Why don't computer games borrow more heavily from such character pieces? The most obvious reason is the same reason why computer fantasy role-playing games come closer to *Dungeons & Dragons* than to *The Lord of the Rings*. It's simply too hard to model human personalities. And even if you could, you can't assume the player would be true to them. So computer science fiction RPGs, like their fantasy cousins, concentrate on the "science" rather than the "fiction."

To be more specific, they actually concentrate on technology. In virtually all science fiction RPGs, you must learn to make the best possible use of the technology available to you or you simply won't get anywhere. Mindscape's *Star Trek V* and Interstel's *Star Fleet II*, for instance, both begin with the player in command of a ship with no choice but to figure out how to command it.

Electronic Arts' *Sentinel Worlds* follows this line as well and, to a different degree, so does Origin's *Space Rogue*. In these latter two games, even if you don't have to be particularly adept at piloting at the beginning of the game, you eventually have to demonstrate at least some competence.

The model for this, of course, is derived from "Star Trek." Much of that famous

series takes place on the bridge of the *Enterprise*, where each officer has a specific technological role to play. The captain is the overall commander and the person who makes the decisions. Thus, games like Electronic Arts' *Starflight* and *Starflight 2*, as well as the games already mentioned, put you in the captain's role.

But captain or not, you're not going to get very far — especially in the *Starflight* series, *Sentinel Worlds*, and *Star Trek V* itself — without the help of a science officer, a medical officer, a communications officer, an engineering officer, a weapons officer, and a navigations officer. In other words: Spock, McCoy, Uhura, Scotty, Chekhov, and Sulu. Only this time you get to choose the names.

Naturally, not all science fiction RPGs follow this model. Omnitrend's *Universe 3* and the *Breach* series, Epyx's *Omnicron Conspiracy*, and Infocom's *BattleTech* put you in command (for the most part) of a single character rather than an entire starship crew. Early in *BattleTech*, in fact, you find yourself utterly alone on your nearly devastated planet, and you have to do a significant amount of walking just to find people willing to help you. *BattleTech* solves the learning problem in an ingenious way — by requiring the character to pass several training missions. Once you've learned how to control a Mech, the real plot begins.

Science fiction RPGs also force you to become enamored of natural resources. It's possible in most of these games to use spaceports as fueling and supply stations, but you'll do far better in most cases to learn to forage from other planets and civilizations. In some games (especially *Star Fleet II* and *Starflight 2*), you find yourself seeking natural resources just to keep your exploration going. In these games, logistical planning becomes as important as technological expertise. The best captain and crew in the universe can't keep a space ship going forever without resources.

What this leads to, of course, is exploration, the true purpose of any science fiction RPG. The fascination of traveling to the stars lies in finding out what's out there, not in how to get there in the first place. We're all interested in extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI), of course, but we have a long way to go before proving that alien life exists. At this point in our history, there is plenty of disagreement about whether any other star but our own even has a planetary system, let alone a life-supporting planet. All exploratory science fiction, therefore, requires a very demanding leap of faith.

The two *Starflight* games are the best ETI games now available. You meet a wide variety of alien life in space and on planet surfaces, and the games offer intriguing ways of communicating with them. Most science fiction RPGs offer some form of ETIs, however, so if your goal is to seek out new life and new civilizations, none of these games will disappoint you. Only Interplay's *Neuromancer*, which is set on a futuristic Earth rather than in outer space, largely ignores the intrigue of alien lifeforms.

With or without ETIs, though, there's still a mystique about what other planets might hold. Even though there's no proof of life on any other planet in our own solar system (except for those tabloid reports of the stone statues of Elvis on Mars), most people would still jump at a chance to visit another planet. Which is precisely why no science fiction RPG ever released concentrates on exploration without including the possibility of alien encounters or discoveries of the ruins of past colonies.

However, in games such as the *Star Saga* and *Star Fleet* series, as well as the first two *Universe* games, you spend a great deal of time establishing mines and other colonial assets. This is the exploration element of the games. And one could even argue that those first two *Universe* games, like the *Star Sagas* and SSG's *Reach for the Stars*, don't even fit the traditional definition of role-playing games. But they contain sufficient role-playing elements to be contemplated.

So what differentiates science fiction role-playing games from fantasy role-playing games? The setting is the primary difference. All fantasy games have dungeons, and the dungeons are stocked with monsters. Some science fiction RPGs (SSI's *Star Command* comes to mind) have their own form of dungeons, and enemy troopers or alien lifeforms are arguably the equivalent of fantasy's monsters. But fantasy games have no element that corresponds to the space ship of science fiction RPGs, and high-tech weaponry can't reasonably be construed as equivalent to fantasy's magic.

Though the technology in science fiction RPGs may be the kind that will never actually exist, it is never wholly fanciful either. Many players consider casting spells to be straining the boundaries of credibility, even if firing high-powered laser weapons is not. That's because science fiction games, like science fiction itself, attempt to project existing technology into the future, and because such technology is grounded in the present, we know what to expect.

In the first dozen years of computer role-playing games, fantasy systems have been better and more numerous than science fiction systems. But in all likelihood, the ratio is about to reverse. Most people find it easier to imagine themselves in the future than in the past because futurism is, for the most part, far more intriguing than history. Slowly but surely, science fiction RPG designers are coming to terms with this realization.

GP

VIRTUAL REALITY

SELBY BATEMAN

HAVING FUN WITH STRIKE ACES

One of the tricky but necessary processes for long-range bombing runs is in-flight refueling. Miss it, and you're grounded.

Several years ago, I played a Commodore 64 computer game that let me simulate the actions of an air traffic controller. I watched the light pulses and printed type that staggered in syncopated rhythms across an on-screen radar map; I listened to the pings of too many commercial aircraft crowding the airways; and I even heard a scratchy digitized voice giving me brief reports concerning various flights about to converge head-on.

After "playing" for several hours, I not only wasn't having any fun, but I also was quickly becoming convinced that air traffic controllers are indeed underpaid and overworked. The game dragged *on* and *on* with the minute-by-minute realism of a demanding job. My blood pressure was rising faster than my score.

There will always be a debate between those game players who want their simulations to be as realistic as possible and those who are willing to sacrifice some realism in order to have a more enjoyable and a less taxing game environment. Flight simulators and aerial combat games continue to be a genre in which this debate rages, and it probably won't stop in the future. One player's love of an exhaustively detailed flight or air combat experience is another's frustration and boredom. Fortunately, there's plenty of room for both extremes — "tastes great!" *and* "less filling!" — as well as all the variations in between.

I'm on the side of those game players who like to get immersed in a well-conceived, richly detailed simulated world, but think that slavish adherence to realism can often get in the way of having a good time. And that's just one of the reasons I'm enjoying a new Accolade game called *Strike Aces: International Bombing Competition* — a colorful and captivating aerial combat game that simulates the bombing and navigation competition held each year by the Strategic Air Command at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota.

I first saw and liked *Strike Aces* when it was previewed at the Consumer Electronics Show in January, and more recently I've had a chance to fly a nearly complete version of the game on my own. The game should be on store shelves by late spring.

The game designers make their intent clear in the documentation: "*Strike Aces* is first and foremost a game.... While the simulation aspects of the design were very important to us, they took a secondary role to the goal of creating a good game." It seems to me that the designers have done a good job of meeting that goal.

In brief, *Strike Aces* offers desktop pilots the chance to climb into the cockpit of any of six different jets: the U.S. F-15E

To load these Paveway II laser-guided bombs onto your jet, simply click on them and move the image to the correct spot.

Strike Eagle, the U.S. F-4E Phantom, the U.S. F-111F Aardvark, the British and German Panavia Tornado IDS (Interdictor Strike Variant), the Swedish Saab AJ37 Viggen, and the Soviet MiG-27 Flogger D.

The controls of each have been simplified for game play, but enough complexity has been left to give players plenty to do and for each fighter/bomber to have a different look, feel, and set of flying characteristics. As part of the competition options and missions available, you'll fly against any of seven different interceptor jets. You can use the keyboard or a joystick to fly, and a mouse option for menu selections is available as well.

There are 16 different bombing missions built into the game, and there's a "Mission Design" option that lets you set up your own custom-built, multi-stage bombing competitions. You can even see if your friends have the right stuff by sharing the missions you build with those gamers who also have *Strike Aces*.

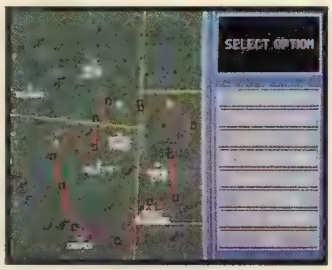
A "Free Flight" segment of *Strike Aces* gives you a chance to learn your way around each aircraft, getting comfortable with the controls, the armaments, and the flying environment. You'll learn to refuel while in flight — an absolutely crucial process for the long bombing competition missions. The variety and steadily rising complexity of the missions insure that you won't get bored with *Strike Aces* for a long time. Begin with the easier covert missions, work up through tactical and strategic challenges, and finally take on the very challenging offensive missions.

The game interface is remarkably easy to use, and the graphics are well designed. There's a natural logic to your available choices, whether it's in selecting pilots, missions, armaments, or jets. The menu of selections lets you choose, load up, and go with a minimum of difficulty. And area and target recon options permit you to see a three-dimensional view of either the general area in which you'll be flying or the actual target you're heading toward. Simply pick the spot from the map and the recon view zooms in and pans counter-clockwise in a continuous 360-degree circle. You can also check the flight course you've been given, and then later compare that with your actual flight.

Whether you're bombing bridges or taking out a terrorist base, Strike Aces offers a colorful and scenic three-dimensional environment.

The variety of decisions to be made and the options available make *Strike Aces* a game that requires attention to detail, careful planning, and quick thinking — especially as the missions get more difficult. Select the wrong combination of weapons for your mission, and you'll be stuck without the right armament to get the job done. Or pay too little attention to your assignment, and you'll miss key points that can help you survive.

Your ultimate goal in *Strike Aces* is to carry out a wide range of missions accurately and efficiently. You'll be scored as you go along, so the more experience you get, the better you'll do. And you'll have to be very good indeed to stay in the running for the Strategic Air Command's Curtis E. LeMay bombing and navigation trophy.



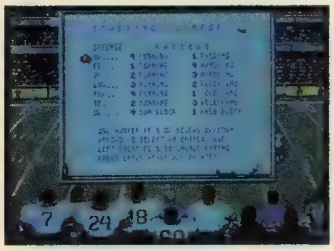
The "Mission Design" feature lets you create your own multi-stage missions working from the area map and a selection of menu choices.

Accolade is a company known for its excellent and entertaining simulations, such as the two *Hardball* baseball games and the two car racing games, *Test Drive* and *The Duel. Strike Aces* brings that same visual richness, action, and playability to the skies. At a time when the PC gaming environment is filled with some superb and varied flight simulators and aerial combat games — Lucasfilm's *Their Finest Hour*, MicroProse's *F-19 Stealth Fighter*, and Microsoft's *Flight Simulator 4.0* come immediately to mind — Accolade's *Strike Aces* is a first-rate, distinctive addition to the PC airways.

GP

ABC MONDAY

GARY MEREDITH



Once you've devised the plays, you have to find the right people to run them. After all, you won't run many successful sweeps without some good guards.

Are you still griping about the last Super Bowl? Maybe you think the game would have been just a wee bit closer if you had been coaching Denver? Or would you prefer to see Atlanta and San Diego playing in the championship for a change? If you don't happen to have the cash to buy a team of your own, you may think that grumbling is your only outlet. Wrong again, O Fan of the Sacred Pigskin!

ABC Monday Night Football from **Data East** not only puts you in charge of the destinies of 28 National Football League teams, but it also does so through an interface any fan can appreciate — the familiar commentary of Frank, Al, and Dan during their one big game of the week. From the opening theme (reproduced fairly well on a standard PC speaker) to the smiling face of Frank Gifford, it's all here. Until the advent of true digital interactive video, this is about as close as computer players are going to get to the real thing.

The appearance of this face has meant "Monday Night Football" to millions for 20 years.

When sports games — and football simulations in particular — were first marketed for PCs, you had to make a choice between good graphics and accurate, complex game play. That's not the case with *ABC Monday Night Football*. You have a lot of options and plays, all with graphics that allow you to see exactly what your own team and its opponents are doing. Lose yardage on a draw play? You can see why and make adjustments for the next time it's run.

Game play is quite simple whether you use the keyboard or a joystick. After you set the length of the quarters, the ball is kicked off, spotted, and the playcalling screen overlay appears. Three plays each for offense and defense are displayed, but you can scroll through several others if these don't suit you. The game comes with over 30 offensive plays and a dozen or so defensive formations, and plays of your own design can be added with the Playmaker Utility.

Once you've settled on a play, press the fire button and the teams reappear. Of course, calling the play is only the beginning. The moves still must be executed, and that's where the smooth interface of this game really helps. Because the graphics are so good, you can really see what's happening, and you're further helped by on-screen icons that identify the players under your direct control.

Executing a running play is as simple as moving the joystick or the cursor key in the direction of the chosen ball carrier prior to the snap. Control then shifts to the runner so that you can exhibit some of the broken-field running that's made you a legend in your own mind.

Passing is only a little more complex. You must drop back and hold down the fire button, which allows you to scroll through the eligible receivers, represented by the helmets at the bottom of the screen. Releasing the button gives you the viewpoint of the chosen receiver, and if he's open, you tap the fire button again to release the ball. If he's covered, you can hold the fire button down again to find another receiver.

The kicking game is simple as well. Once selected, a punt is automatic (fake punts can be

Remember that the longer the play, the greater the chance of failure. It's usually best to start with the running game or a short passing game until you've discovered your opponent's tendencies.

Although you've called a passing formation, you can still run out of it if you don't get the defense you like. Just make sure you've got someone behind you for the handoff.

called and are run as passing plays). Kicking a field goal or an extra point utilizes a system of power meters similar to those found in most golf simulations.

The variables of the game — all those things on the periphery, such as penalties, injuries, and sideline entertainment — can be found in abundance as well. The refs aren't going to catch everything, but they'll usually see more than they miss. A word of warning: The refs are especially sensitive about pass interference and intentional grounding. With the latter in particular, it's almost always better to eat the ball than throw it at the last second and risk a penalty. In fact, there are a couple of Hall of Fame quarterbacks from the 70s who probably wouldn't have been so famous if these refs were throwing the hankies back then.

Injuries are also a factor in *ABC Monday Night Football*. You never know when they're going to hit you, so it's a wise coach who fields a team with talented backup players — especially at skill positions. As for the sideline entertainment ... well, what game would be complete without a few shots of the cheerleaders or a player yelling "Hi, Mom!" to the camera?

The Playmaker Utility adds another dimension to what is already an excellent simulation. With it, you can become the next offensive or defensive gridiron genius. When you combine the number of options afforded each player with your individual control over the team members, you get an almost infinite variety of plays that can be devised. So you can come up with a new defense to rival the Bears' Number 46, or an offense with pass patterns so complex you'll need five Steve Largents to run it. Try to add a couple of old single wing plays to see how they'd stack up against modern defenses.

Another option would be to see how the wishbone offense would work in the pros. Hey — if it can be done on a football field, you can probably put it in the playbook of *ABC Monday Night Football*. The Team Modification Utility is an adjunct of the Playmaker Utility. Once you've designed your plays, you just need to go out and get the right team to run them. Remember those five Largents, for example?

Until virtual reality simulations are practical, we'll have to be satisfied with computers, and no PC game is going to give you the true feel of an athletic event — there are just too many intangibles and subjective impressions to cram into 640K. But *ABC Monday Night Football* is as close as anyone has come to realizing the true football experience.

The graphics and the sound (given the limitations of the PC speaker) are wonderful, and the TV-like interface makes game play very intuitive. OK, so it's not football season. When did that stop any true fan of the game?

GP

Injuries are always a part of the game, and it's especially bad if you lose a player at a skill position. Always make sure you have quality backups, especially for your quarterback and running back.

If there's one thing the refs don't like, it's intentionally grounding the ball to avoid a loss. Sometimes they'll even call it when you have an eligible receiver relatively close by.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory (640K for Tandy); VGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-Color, or Hercules graphics; joystick recommended.

BLUE ANGELS

GARY MEREDITH

The Blue Angels flying team has been a fixture at international airshows for nearly 45 years. What began in 1946 with three prop-driven Grumman Hellcats and soared into the jet age with the Grumman Tiger and the Douglas Skyhawk, today thrills millions with the ultimate in naval fighters, the F/A-18 Hornet. In *Blue Angels Formation Flight Simulation*, you climb into the cockpit of the McDonnell-Douglas Hornet for as wild a ride as you're likely to find with your feet on the ground.

A vertical climbout directly above the runway is always a crowd pleaser. Be sure to apply full afterburner, unless you'd welcome an unexpected "hammerhead" maneuver instead.

If you expect to be blasting MiGs out of the sky, try another game. This **Accolade** simulation is strictly for the high-speed aerobatics crowd, which, judging by the turnout at any Blue Angels demonstration, is a pretty big group. And all the Angels' maneuvers, solo and group, are here.

Using the menu options, you can break down these maneuvers; go over them in a flight simulator; practice them alone or in sequence; or incorporate them into a high-level, low-level, or flat airshow. When you're through, you'll be ready to march out onto the flight line with the rest of the Angels.

A good way to begin your training by running through the airshow demo. This gives you a good idea of how the team performs, how the show is structured, and what the sequence of formations is. By using the different viewpoints (from the stands, the chase plane, or the balloon), you'll be able to see what goes on during an exhibition. Afterward, you may want to use the spectator mode to experience a plane's maneuvers without working the controls.

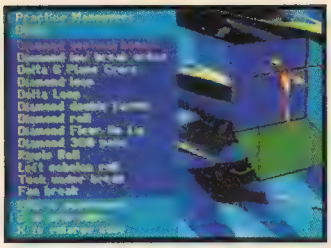
The major difference between high and low shows is only a matter of a few feet. For safety reasons, most shows are of the high variety.

Since you'll be training for a specific position (lead, slot, wing, or solo), the spectator mode is a valuable tool, enabling you to orient yourself in relation to the other team members before actually having to fly in formation. The simulator comes next and is quite an accurate analog to the machines naval aviators use when making the transition from low-speed jet trainers to the Hornet or the Tomcat.

Then, when you finally climb into the cockpit of the F/A-18, you can hone your skills through practice flights, both solo and with the other team members. One of the really nice features of *Blue Angels* is the way each maneuver is mapped in a 3-D cube for a true representation of the maneuver. And once you've attempted a maneuver, your actual flight path is mapped in 3-D, as well. You're also told what percentage of the correct path you followed, along with the percentage of your maximum deviation, so you can fine-tune an intricate maneuver such as the "diamond vertical break" or "fleur-de-lis."

Two other helpful features in the simulator are the autopi-

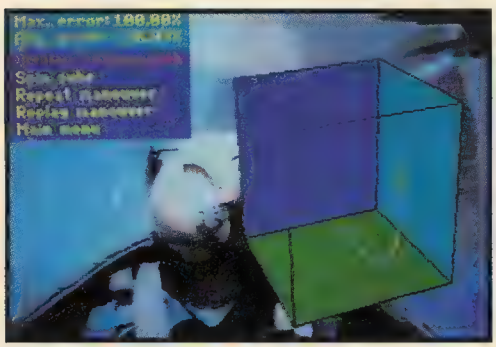
If you think the "knife edge" is tops in thrills, try going one step further to the "opposing horizontal roll." This one will really make you update that insurance policy.



Before going through a maneuver, you can check it out with the 3-D cube display, which shows your plane's location relative to the other planes throughout the maneuver.

lot and stop-time modes. The autopilot setting will walk you through a maneuver, noting the different control inputs needed. Stop-time will pause after each change in the controls so you can take note of what needs to be done, when, and where. Once you're in the plane for practice, you lose these features — although there is a break warning which sends you back to the beginning of a maneuver if you veer too far from the flight path.

Once you're finished practicing the individual maneuvers, it's back to the simulator to rehearse an entire airshow. The simulator once again provides input cues, but it can still get quite confusing since you must now fly through a continuous set of maneuvers. Then you go on to a practice airshow in the plane before going out to thrill the crowds for real. As a reward for a job well done, there's a free flight mode for those carefree, unstructured, cross-country jaunts.



The error 3-D cube not only lets you know where you went wrong, but also when and by how much. This can be a very humbling experience, indeed.

Even though many of the aerobatics look quite formidable, you'll probably discover that the most daunting task in the game is simply learning to fly in close formation. If you're flying the slot or lead position, just making a simple banked turn without shearing the wings off the guy next to you can be the ultimate exercise in frustration.

Fortunately, for a flight simulator flown exclusively from the keyboard, control is very smooth, without the skittishness that accompanies many flight simulators. All inputs are very positive, and the plane has a natural stability (no doubt due to some fly-by-wire black box magic incorporated into its design) that makes it a pleasure to fly. But it's still tough to fly "tip to tip" through anything more difficult than straight, level flight.

Those jet jockeys who normally jump past the practice mode in this type of game may discover a need for backtracking to the simulator. It's one thing, after all, to do a little "down on the deck" strafing run all by yourself, and quite another to mesh a 24-ton, fire-breathing monster into a delicate formation with three or five other planes.

You can also vary the graphics for more or less detail in the planes, the scenery, or both. It's fortunate that Accolade included this feature, since it would be nearly impossible to fly the planes in VGA if you have anything less than an AT-class computer. Even with a fast XT, you must settle for low or medium detail and the lower resolution setting the game offers if your maneuvers are to have any semblance of smoothness.

There's no death and destruction dealt out here, and, given the present world climate, that's as it should be. With the increasing expense of designing and testing — let alone manufacturing — planes such as the Hornet, it may be that we're seeing the last of a breed.

You'll want to give that balloon a wide berth, not only for safety reasons, but also because it provides one of your "eyes" for observing the progress of an airshow.

If you have the chance, see the Blue Angels (or its Air Force counterpart, the Thunderbirds) while the team is still performing. But if you can't get to a show, there's no better way — short of being a Blue Angel yourself — to gain a true appreciation of the skill and dedication it takes to yank these chunks of metal around the skies at Mach 1 than *Blue Angels Formation Flight Simulation.*

GP

Hardware requirements: 384K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics.

CIRCUIT'S

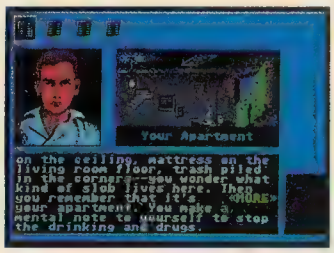
GARY MEREDITH

GAME LOOK TALK INVENTORY ACTION MAP EXI
Chiriga's
Tall and black, with her cheeks patterned by ritual tribal tattoos, Chiri is someone whom you'd rather have on your side in a fight. Even her rare smiles are frightening, her teeth flashing disturbingly
«MORE»

Whenever you need information, Chiriga's bar is the place to go. The dancers are entertaining, the drinks are cheap, and anyone you might want to see is likely to show up during the evening.

Life in the Budayeen is, to say the least, interesting. When the fragments of the old world order coalesced under the mantle of Islam, it was understood by imam and caliph alike that certain... shall we say, *vices*, must be tolerated in some small way. Thus the Budayeen is an oasis (or quagmire, depending on your point of view) in the sands of Islam where almost anything is possible — for the right price.

Circuit's Edge from **Infocom** paints an intriguing portrait of one possible future, in which technological progress is at extreme odds with ultra-conservative religious philosophy. The story, written by science fiction author George Alec Effinger, follows the adventures of Marîd Audran. Marîd, once a child of the streets, has become an operative of the powerful Friedlander Bey, or Papa, as he is known in the Budayeen. A popular saying goes, "Papa doesn't just have connections; he *is* connections." So when Bey talks, *everyone* listens.

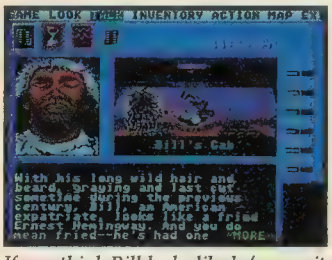


Your place looks pretty bleak, but by Budayeen standards, it's quite palatial. Besides, you're out on the streets or in the bars most of the time.

Those listeners include Marîd, who has been given the task of avenging the death of one of Papa's associates. Of course, in the Budayeen, nothing is ever simple. As Marîd goes about his investigation, he becomes involved in other interrelated investigations and, eventually, things become so intertwined that you're not sure of the time, let alone the progress of the case.

Along the way, you must also attend to normal human functions: eating, sleeping, and staying out of dark alleys as much as possible. The latter is no easy chore, since the Budayeen at night (when you do most of your work) often seems like one big dark alley. But since nearly all the places where your contacts hang out are closed during the day, you'll have to get busy when the sun goes down. Be careful — if you don't budget your time, you may find that you've painted yourself into a corner.

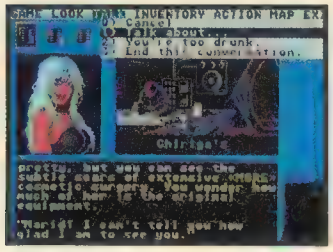
The task of rescuing a kidnapped boy named Abdul-Hassan is a case in point. If you spend too much time looking for the old jeweler's missing sapphire, or collecting money owed to Guido, you'll miss the kidnappers' midnight deadline. And if Abdul-Hassan dies, you might as well go ahead and pack your suitcase. Papa will disown you, and you'll be a pariah throughout the Budayeen. Just be glad they don't relieve you of some important body part in the tradition of Islamic justice.


GAME LOOK TALK INVENTORY ACTION MAP EXI
Bill's Gab
With his long wild hair and beard, graying and last cut sometime during the previous century, Bill, an American expatriate, looks like a fried Ernest Hemingway. And you do mean fried--he's had one
«MORE»

If you think Bill looks like he's seen it all, you're almost right. Actually, with the aid of various chemicals, he has seen it all — and then some. But he'll always take you wherever you want to go.

Take notes on everyone you meet and everything you see. The game has a handy recall feature with which you can play back past conversations, but it won't catch all the details of an encounter. Small hints, such as the odor of a particular cologne or a face briefly glimpsed, really do make the difference between solving all the puzzles and being thrown out of the Budayeen by an extremely displeased Papa.

Nearly all the inhabitants of the Budayeen are "chipped-in" to varying extents, and Marîd is no exception. Computer chips, called *moddies*, are plugged into receptacles surgically implanted into the head of the user. These moddies — and the subordinate chips, called daddies — modify the behavior and abilities of the user. For example, Marîd owns a moddy that controls his hypothalamic functions, so that he can, in an emergency, suppress the effects of fatigue, hunger, or pain.



Girls like Arissa usually busy themselves by getting customers to buy them drinks or spend a few minutes with them in hotels. But the "entertainers" can give you valuable info if you ask them correctly.

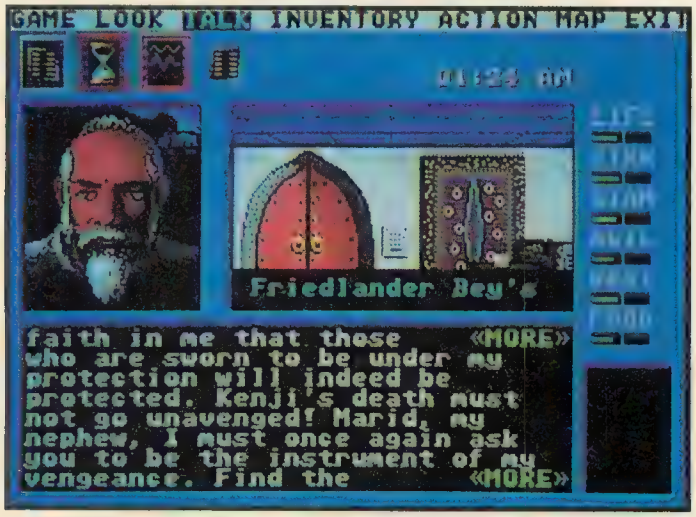
You can buy other chips at either Laila's Mod Shop or from one of the many street dealers. They can allow you to understand other languages, become a computer hacker, possess superhuman strength, or dazzle would-be muggers with martial arts abilities. There's a big trade in the Budayeen for these chips, and the wise purchase and use of moddies is another key to success in *Circuit's Edge*.

Money management is critical as well. The monetary unit of the Budayeen is the *kiam*, and you're staked to several hundred when the game begins. You go through these pretty quickly, however. Food and moddies don't come cheaply, and you'll find that doling out too much cash as *baksheesh* puts a strain on your finances.

"Baksheesh" is an Arabic term that means more than a tip or a gratuity, but not quite a bribe. At least the Arabic perception of baksheesh lacks the stigma of an out-and-out bribe. It's a fine point, certainly, but there's no denying that baksheesh, prudently used, is an effective means of getting information from people and access to places that might otherwise be off-limits.

There are, fortunately, a number of ways to acquire more kiams. You meet some people who offer employment — and the jobs pay well. Or you can try your luck at roulette or baccarat down at the Gambling Den on Third Street. Be forewarned, though, that the odds definitely favor the house, particularly once you've won a few kiams. Knowing when to walk away from the gaming tables is an art to be developed in *Circuit's Edge*.

If you're really desperate, you can always resort to armed robbery. The downside here is that you usually end up killing your victim, and the attention of the Budayeen police force will be focused directly — and aggressively — on you. These guys carry out the letter of the law, not because they're upstanding citizens, but because they really savor the opportunity to beat the hell out of someone.


GAME LOOK TALK INVENTORY ACTION MAP EXIT
Friedlander Bey's
faith in me that those «MORE»
who are sworn to be under my
protection will indeed be
protected. Kenji's death must
not go unavenged! Marid, my
nephew, I must once again ask
you to be the instrument of my
vengeance. Find the «MORE»

Friedlander Bey is the real power in the Budayeen and beyond. If he's on your side, you have carte blanche throughout the enclave, including with the police. But when he wants something done, you'd better do it — and quickly.

Those familiar with Effinger's work will be interested to note that *Circuit's Edge* takes place between the novels *When Gravity Fails* and *A Fire in the Sun*. It's a tribute to both the author and the game designers that the flavor of these novels has been transferred so successfully to the more-limited medium of a computer game.

Before getting involved in a game session, you should know that the text parser is not the most accessible you're likely to find. Unless you word a question or phrase exactly like it wants, you'll probably get an "I don't know" or some other useless response. And, oddly enough, when you ask questions outside the boundaries of your investigation, you get some reference to restaurants. Go figure.

For all the latest in moddies, Laila's is the place to go. You'll find, however, that the one chip you desperately need has already been sold. You can earn it, though, if you offer a helping hand to one of the local merchants.

You should also be aware that this game is designed for adults. The denizens of the Budayeen are an eclectic mix of prostitutes, drug dealers, addicts, and con men. Some of the prostitutes' replies in particular could be considered suggestive — though they can't be considered more than that.

Circuit's Edge travels much the same territory as *Neuromancer*, but with better graphics and a much easier gameplay interface. Let's hope that the trend of close involvement of science fiction authors in game design continues. *Circuit's Edge* is a wonderful example of what can be done when designers add authors in the loop.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; mouse optional; supports sound boards; 5 1/4" drive and second floppy or hard drive required.

THE COLONEL'S

LESLIE MIZELL

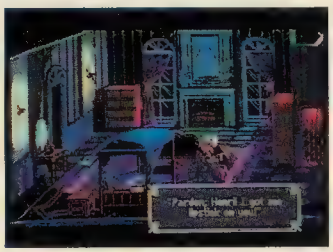
By entering one of the four secret passageways in the house, you can eavesdrop on conversations or keep an eye on the occupants of the house.

It was a dark and stormy night.

Lightning flashes in the distance. A full moon glitters from behind ominous clouds. The storm moves ever closer to the dilapidated mansion where an odd assortment of characters has gathered to hear the colonel's announcement.

Before the night is over, all but four of them will be dead.

The Colonel's Bequest is a new mystery from **Sierra**, the leader in interactive adventures. But while the game is long on mood, it's short on substance. It's a throwback for designer Roberta Williams, who developed a game called *Mystery House* years before starting her popular *King's Quest* series. But if Laura Bow, the heroine of *The Colonel's Bequest*, is to become the heroine of a series, Ms. Williams needs to brush up on her Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan Doyle. It takes more than secret panels and planted clues to keep mystery fans happy.



They say Colonel Dijon has been confined to a wheelchair for years. But with a pretty (and willing) maid like Fifi, the hours must pass quickly.

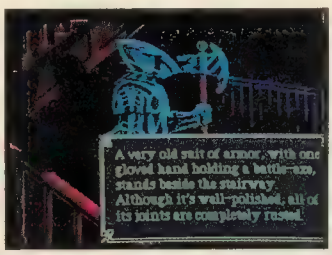
Certainly, the ingredients of a great mystery are all here. The time is 1927, the height of the Roaring Twenties, when men are men and women like them that way. Laura Bow, a college journalist, is invited by her roommate, Lillian, to spend the weekend at her uncle's plantation. When they arrive, Laura finds that the run-down plantation is buried in the swamps of Louisiana. The gathering of friends and relatives is completely cut off from the outside world.

And what a peculiar gathering it is. Besides Lillian's uncle, Colonel Henri Dijon — an invalid confined to a wheelchair — there's Rudy, the greedy nephew with an eye on inheriting a fortune; Gloria, the "actress" who is having an affair with at least two men in the group; Ethel, Lillian's alcoholic mother; Clarence Sparrow, the crooked lawyer with a bad gambling habit; Wilbur C. Feels, the family doctor who knows secrets about members of the Dijon family; Gertie, the snob who looks down on other members of the family; and Lillian, who now seems much more highly strung than she did on campus.

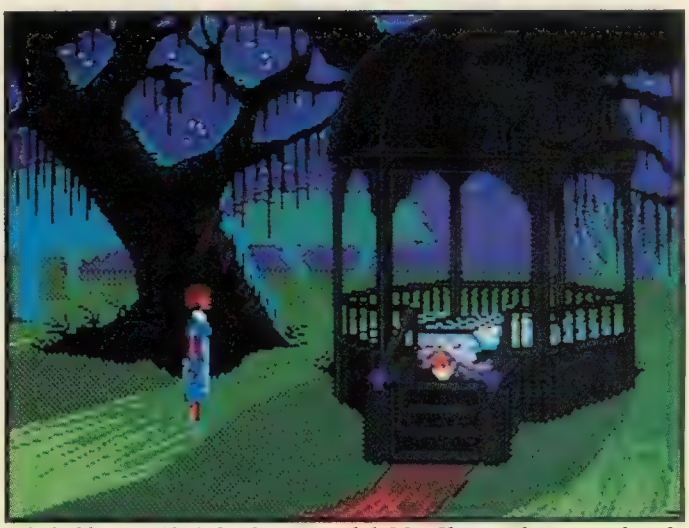
The household servants are no less unusual. Jeeves, the butler, is in a position to know everyone's business. The French maid, Fifi, seems to be on, umm, "intimate" terms with several men in the household. And Celie, the cook, is said to dabble in voodoo.

It's no wonder the colonel's announcement is such a bombshell. Before dessert has been served, he tells the family and friends who are down for the weekend that they — with the exception of Laura, of course — will split his inheritance evenly. But if any of them die before the colonel, the money will be divided among the survivors.

And as the night progresses, it becomes obvious that *someone* isn't willing to share.

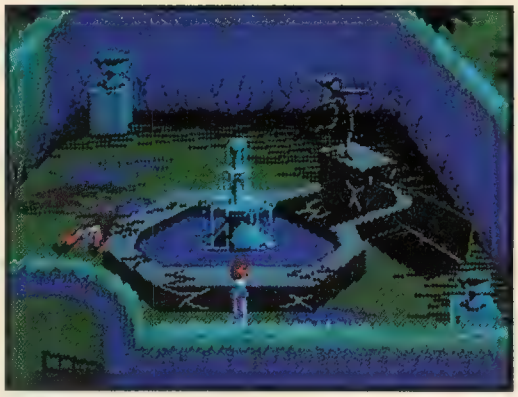

A very old suit of armor, with one
gloved hand holding a battle-axe,
stands beside the stairway.
Although it's well-polished, all of
its joints are completely rusted.

Suits of armor aren't in old, dark houses just for show. You can bet that there's at least one secret hiding behind this rusty guy's chain mail.



It looks like poor Gloria has been strangled. Was Clarence that upset when she threw him over? Or was it someone else?

BEQUEST



The two mysteries — solving the murders and finding the Civil War treasure — start to come together when you uncover this secret passageway in the hedge garden.

Williams has set the game up to resemble those old dark house mystery plays such as *The Cat and the Canary* and *Ten Little Indians*. You get an odd assortment of people together, cut them off from the outside world on an island or by a storm, provide a motive for murder, and then sit back and watch what happens.

One prerequisite for an old dark house mystery is a house with secret passageways. There are four of them readily available in *The Colonel's Bequest*, and another you'll find near the end of the game. Subtly placed clues range from a monogrammed handkerchief to a cigar butt. And *everyone* has a secret, as well as a motive for wanting the colonel dead. So far, so good.

But one of the major differences between this game and other Sierra adventures lies in its scope. In most Sierra games, you're exploring a new land (or lands). Each item you obtain is a key that unlocks a different area of the game. You rarely need to trek over area you've already covered, whether it's a forest, a planet, or a police station.

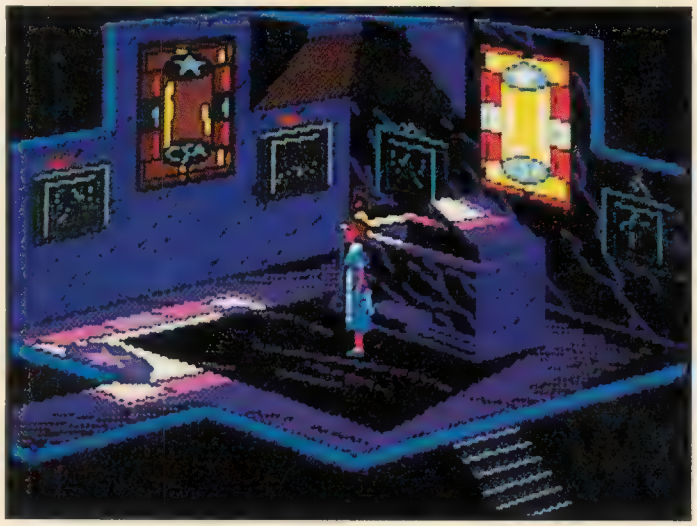
But in *The Colonel's Bequest*, you're confined to the plantation and its grounds. So each act (in keeping with its stage atmosphere, the game is divided into eight acts, signifying the hours between seven p.m. and three a.m.) simply consists of searching every room of the plantation, the four secret panels, and the outbuildings. Over and over.

And you never know if you're making progress because *The Colonel's Bequest* lacks the point scoring method found in most Sierra games. You have four things to accomplish in each act, and the only way you know when you've stumbled across something, somebody, or some body you're supposed to is the clock that appears on the screen, its hands moving a quarter hour closer to striking the hour, when a new act will begin.

As Laura, you move through the game as a regular buttinsky, questioning everyone you meet, searching through all the rooms, never reporting any of the bodies you discover — even pumping information out of the Dijons' pet parrot. The suspects are all vile, which can only be expected, but Laura herself is none too likable. One of the things *The Colonel's Bequest* is missing is that mysterious stranger who arrives in the midst of the trouble and becomes the love interest, the primary suspect, or both. This game could really use, say, a policeman or detective to liven up the action and add some authority to Laura's snooping.

But though it has some fairly major faults, *The Colonel's Bequest* isn't a bad game, especially for novice players. There are lots of bodies to discover, several ways for Laura to die that provide some masochistic amusement, a couple of red herrings, and even a Civil War treasure subplot to keep you interested after you've figured out the identity of the murderer(s). Which won't be *too* far into the game play. So all in all, *The Colonel's Bequest* is OK entertainment. It's just all too elementary, my dear Watson.

GP



Locked in the cradle of the deep! But a few old Rebel bones aren't going to deter the likes of Laura Bow: College Journalist. Not when there's a treasure to uncover and a murderer to unmask.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; joystick and mouse optional; supports sound boards.

CRIME WAVE

GARY MEREDITH

Here's one way to remedy problems at the train station. With all these bullets flying, is it any wonder most people take their chances with the airlines?

Back when you were on the force, you always got the toughest assignments. Then a crime boss killed your wife, and you left the police force to strike out on your own. Now Lucas McCabe Investigations can pick and choose cases, but you *still* seem to get the really tough ones.

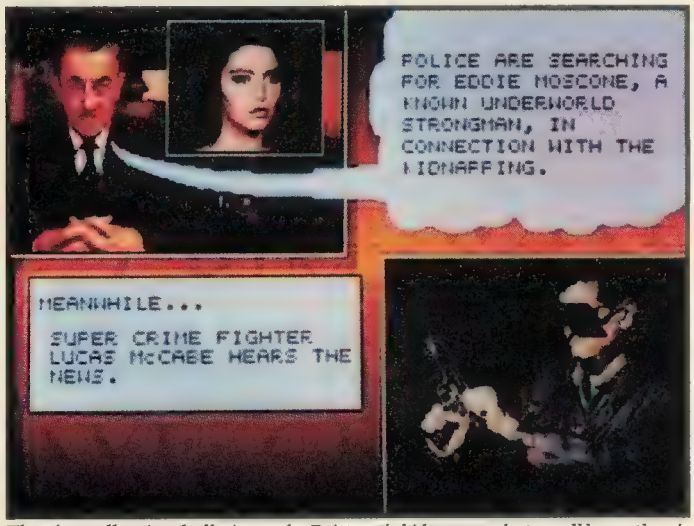
When Brittany Cole, the free-spirited daughter of the president, is kidnapped, you knew you were the only man for the job. The trouble is, the man who engineered the kidnapping — the nefarious and mysterious King Pin — knows it, too. Now every lowlife in his employ is out to get you before you can get to Brittany.

It's no wonder Brittany's father, the president, loses sleep at night over his daughter's antics. And what happened to all those turtleneck sweaters he bought her?

Crime Wave, with its digitized graphics and its use of **Access'** RealSound system, superficially resembles the earlier *Mean Streets*. Make no mistake, though. While *Mean Streets* was a role-playing adventure with a few arcade sequences, *Crime Wave* is an arcade game with some dazzling embellishments.

The arcade sequences are tied together by impressive digitized images, some with animation. Though these scenes will never be mistaken for full motion video, they are, nonetheless, fascinating. The real game, however, is in the arcade sequences, and these are just as impressive in their own way. The action, with a 286 computer, is quite smooth and realistic. In fact, for some, there may be a bit too much realism.

In most arcade games, when you kill an enemy, he just disappears. Not so with *Crime Wave*. When you nail someone — especially if you're using some of the heavier artillery you have at your disposal — he explodes with fiery hands, arms, legs, and even a head, flying in all directions. This has to be the most graphically violent game to date and may be shocking to anyone used to the rather sterilized violence portrayed in most computer games.


POLICE ARE SEARCHING FOR EDDIE MOSCONE, A KNOWN UNDERWORLD STRONGMAN, IN CONNECTION WITH THE KIDNAPPING.
MEANWHILE...
SUPER CRIME FIGHTER LUCAS McCABE HEARS THE NEWS.

There's an all-points bulletin out for Brittany's kidnappers, but we all know there's only one man for the job. But, Luke, please — get a new pair of shades.

Something else that many players may find distressing is the rather suggestive nature of the storyline graphics. To say that some of the scenes with Brittany are titillating would be an understatement. After all, the woman is manhandled, bound, threatened with a gun, and generally shown in submissive scenes, all the while wearing a little red number that scarcely conceals her attributes. *Crime Wave* is billed as an adult game, but the scenes are not only too suggestive for some, but also demeaning to women. While *Mean Streets* featured some good-natured sexiness, *Crime Wave* goes a bit further.

If you find yourself getting low on ammo, energy, or lives, it might pay for you to blast a few barrels or crates and pick up whatever you find inside.

As an arcade game, however, *Crime Wave* is great. The game play is straightforward and smooth, even though it is strictly keyboard-based, without mouse or joystick support. You can reconfigure the keyboard to suit your taste, though most will find the default setting acceptable. The

only possible objection is the use of a two-key combination for firing your small weapon and for jumping.

There are three different levels of play, though most will want to select the easy level to begin with, since even at that level the bullets and shuriken will really be flying. Unfortunately, there is no save feature, so you'll probably spend a lot of time going over the same territory the first few times you play. It pays to note the locations of extra lives or caches of ammo and energy on your first trip through to make your life a little easier the next time.

Since the object of the game is to rescue Brittany and confront the King Pin, most of your time will be spent accumulating the firepower, energy, and lives you'll need for the final scenario. Fortunately, you're given adequate opportunity to stockpile everything you'll need.

The warehouse bonus rooms are especially full of goodies, so you'll want to try every door you find inside. These rooms contain laser beam sequencers or kinetic death pads, which are deadly but solvable security systems for you to breach. Every one has a discernible pattern, so if you just watch for awhile, you should be able to deduce a way past the beams and pads.

You'll also want to pick up all the money and drugs you find lying around. They'll add to your score, and they'll keep the bad guys from using them to finance their master plan. Extra lives are awarded for a certain total score (it varies depending on the stage). So the more people you kill, the more lives you get. And you're going to need all those lives if you're to survive what's waiting for you at the King Pin's place.

If you thought Brittany was a handful for her father, just wait until you see how much trouble she causes her kidnappers.

Another way of acquiring energy, ammo, and lives is to blast away at any barrels, boxes, or other containers you may see in a scene. These objects nearly always conceal something useful.

In many scenes, there are either henchmen or machines shooting at you from seemingly impregnable positions. But you can attack them successfully with a jump and a well-timed blast. As far as general maneuvering through the hail of gunfire goes, it's probably best — if a bit ridiculous-looking — if you go through life crouched. You can still fire on your enemies, but you're a smaller target for them.

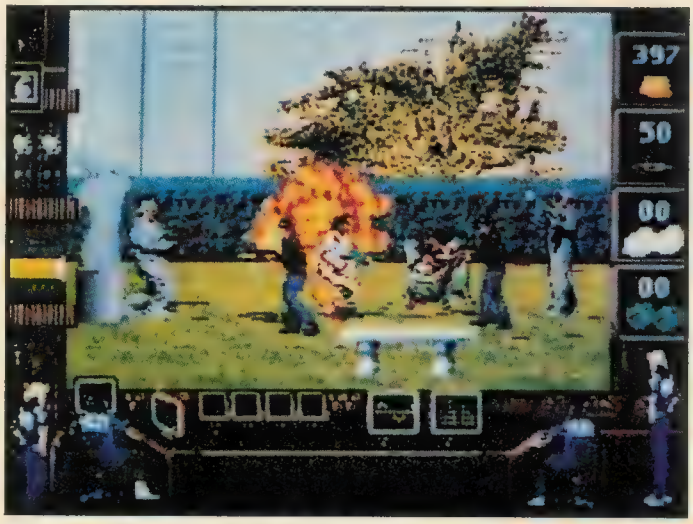
Look out for the guys firing from the high positions, as well as the ninjas, whose shuriken seem to have minds of their own, and rarely fly in straight, predictable paths. These shuriken, in fact, have a homing capability, but it can be overcome by using the boxes, barrels, or posts in a scene to block them.

Crime Wave is a gorgeous game to look at and play, especially if you have a relatively fast computer and VGA capability. While the graphics are certainly acceptable in EGA, the game play with anything slower than a 286 computer is not. Even with reduced resolution, the action is just too choppy for even a fast XT.

On the other hand, depending on your computer's speaker, you can expect to get reasonably good sound without an add-on sound board, thanks to RealSound. While the sound production won't be mistaken for a CD player, it is several cuts above the usual garbage that emanates from PC speakers.

Those expecting another *Mean Streets* will be disappointed, but if they'll take *Crime Wave* for what it is — a giant leap in the realm of computer arcade games — their disappointment won't last long. It may be a little too suggestive for some, but there's no denying that it's also very exciting to play.

GP

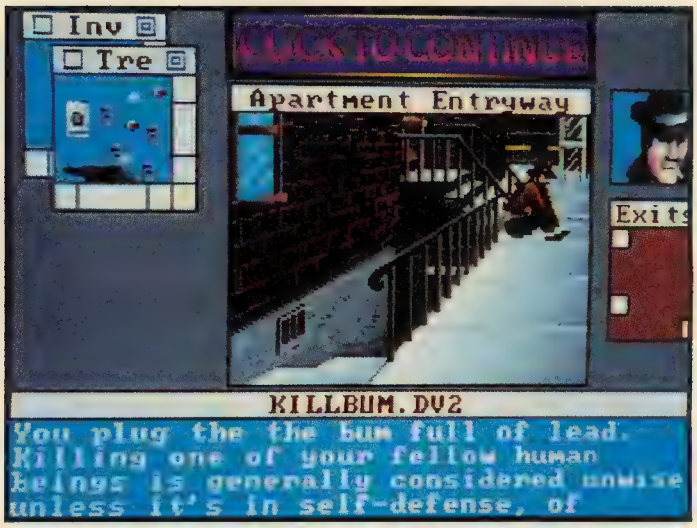


What a treat! You've been cordially invited to a quaint little garden party at the estate of the King Pin. Firearms are optional, but probably essential given the ugly turn this party seems to have taken.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; hard drive required.

DEJA VU II: LOST

MATTHEW A. FIRME


Inv
Tre
Apartment Entryway
Exits
KILLBUM.DV2
You plug the the bum full of lead. Killing one of your fellow human beings is generally considered unwise unless it's in self-defense, of

Sure, it can be frustrating out there with so many obstacles in your way. But senseless violence will only get you one thing...

You're Ace Harding, P.I. A gumshoe. A private dick. A shamus. Your eyes open, your head reels, and you look blearily around. You're lying on the bathroom floor of some cheap Vegas hotel, an empty bottle of booze at your feet. Nothing new in that, but as your head clears you start to remember some details.

There was that mess back in Chicago ... the murder of Joey Siegel. You managed to clear yourself of the charge, but one of Siegel's mob cronies, Tony Malone, lost $112,000 in the deal — and he's decided that you're to blame. Gradually, the pieces start falling into place.

As the game begins, you are lying naked on a bathroom floor. The experience is humiliating—especially since you don't know whose bathroom it is.

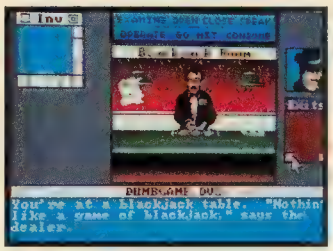
You recall being abducted by a couple of Malone's gorillas and dragged back to Las Vegas. Though you know you didn't take the money, Malone doesn't want to dicker over trivialities. One way or another, you'll have to settle up.

That, for the most part, is all you have to work with as **ICOM's** *Deja Vu II* begins — just you in a dirty bathroom, trying to get a handle on what's happening now and what to do next. This is, after all, a detective game; you'll have to pay attention to any details that come your way, any names or addresses, no matter how trivial they may seem.

One of the first things you'll have to get used to is the game's interface. *Deja Vu II* uses an icon-and-window system; you perform almost every task with the eight-option command window and floating arrow pointer. Your location in the game is displayed in the main window, your inventory in another window, and even more windows appear when you open various items (such as suitcases, wallets, and desks).

At times the screen is so full of windows that they cover the command window or the main window. Fortunately, all of the game's elements can be moved around the screen, and the size and shape of the windows can be changed. Although the number of windows and their overlapping can often be frustrating, the interface is generally quite effective. Although you do have the option of playing with your keyboard, the game is obviously designed for use with a mouse.

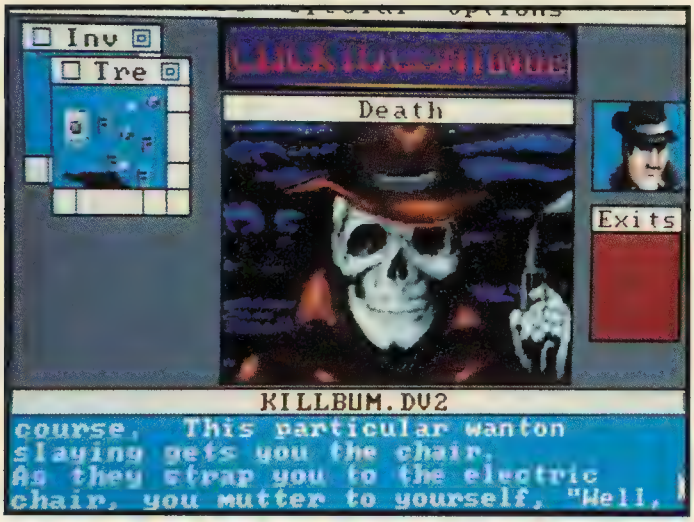
Of course, a limit of eight verbs does lead to some odd usage. For example, to remedy your nakedness as play begins (and if you don't, the police will), you must click "operate," click on the pants, then click on the "self" icon. In like fashion, you "operate" your "self" on a flashlight to turn it on. You'll probably mix this procedure up at times (operating the flashlight on yourself is one unsavory example), but soon it becomes second nature.



Sure, everybody loves a game of cards. What you need, though, is quick money, not a hobby. Look for a dealer who understands your needs.

The Nevada desert surrounds your hotel, stretching for miles in every direction. Except for an old dirt trail, there's nothing worth finding out here.

There are a few command shortcuts you can use to keep the game moving along. By double-clicking on something, you can examine it without using the command window. By double-clicking an exit, you can open a closed door, or proceed through an open one. These are actions you perform



...The Chair. Although you'll be tempted, there's never any need to get tough in this game.

often, so the shortcut feature is a welcome addition.

Danger is everywhere, and Malone's thugs are always ready to ice you if they think you're wasting time or trying to skip town. From the very beginning of the game, *Deja Vu II* will offer ample opportunities for accidental death. You might choose, out of sheer frustration, to hit the wrong person. Or you may find yourself wandering in the Nevada desert until you die of thirst. So, as is true of so many of these adventure games, you should save early, and save often.

You must also contend with a time limit imposed by Tony Malone and enforced by his cigar-chewing strong man, Stogie. You have one week to come up with the dough, or Stogie will apologetically, but efficiently, kill you. The week is, of course, in the game's time frame and not realtime, and it really flies by. This creates a problem of sorts, as there is no calendar or timer in the game to help you keep track of that precious week. Occasionally Stogie shows up and makes some veiled threat about running out of time, but he's not a man of specifics. Again, you'll find that saving your game frequently is vital.

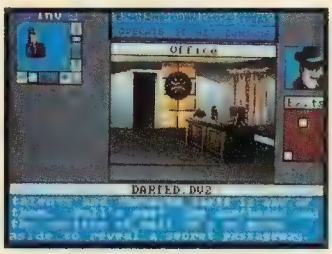
Malone's demand of repayment may lead you to believe that the solution lies in building the 12 or so dollars you have into a fortune at the casino, but you'll soon discover that nobody is that lucky. Certainly not you. The blackjack tables are only a stepping stone, intended to give you just enough money for a little traveling. The real key to success in *Deja Vu II* lies in searching, examining your finds, and making associations. In this respect, *Deja Vu II* is a true detective mystery, an electronic Micky Spillane novel.

Yet, as is often the case in the detective yarn, there are a few twists and leaps of logic involved in wrapping up the mystery that only the author could foresee. Yes, in retrospect the clues are all there, but as you play you might never think to operate yourself on a paperweight or to stick a magnet to an elevator. Yet these things are critical to solving the mystery.

Fortunately, ICOM is ready to help the puzzled game player. Included with every copy of *Deja Vu II* is an order form for a hint book. The hint book is very useful, and allows the player to select exactly how much help is really needed. Chances are, you'll need some. At times, you may even swear that *Deja Vu II* was *designed* to sell hint books.

GP

Don't underestimate this studious fellow in the city morgue. He can be pretty stubborn, and only the proper authorization will change his mind.



Something's not right here. This office is awfully high class for an old dry cleaner's in the middle of the desert. And when you try the dart board, it slides out of the way to reveal a hidden office.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA or EGA graphics; mouse recommended.

GUNBOAT

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

Navigate and check your progress by calling up the map screen.

From the moment Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" comes bleeping out of your PC speaker — accompanying a digitized title screen of a patrol boat tearing through the Mekong Delta with all guns blazing — you know what to expect from **Accolade's** new river combat simulation, *Gunboat*.

Having scored a resounding success last year with his exciting tank simulator, *Steel Thunder*, game designer Tom Loughry wanted to see if there was another sort of combat simulation that could be hitched to the same engine. Since the PC game market is awash with aircraft and armor programs, Loughry decided to focus on naval subjects.

From the pilot's position, you can steer the boat while the computerized crew handles the gunnery.

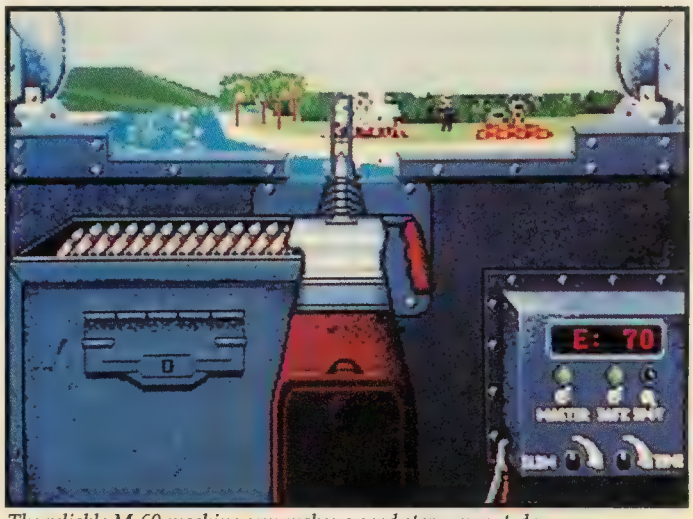
Dreadnaught-era battleships of the turn of the century didn't lend themselves to his game system (and are of interest, alas, only to a relatively small number of game players), and the more he researched the modern high-tech warships, the less suitable they seemed as subject matter. Such vessels fight their battles electronically, lobbing guided missiles at targets that are visible only as blips on a radar screen. Loughry was looking for something with more drama, immediacy, and visceral impact.

When he discovered the Navy's PBRs (Patrol Boat, River), Loughry knew he'd found the perfect subject. These swift, graceful, heavily armed gunboats are designed to get close to the enemy and blast him at point-blank range.

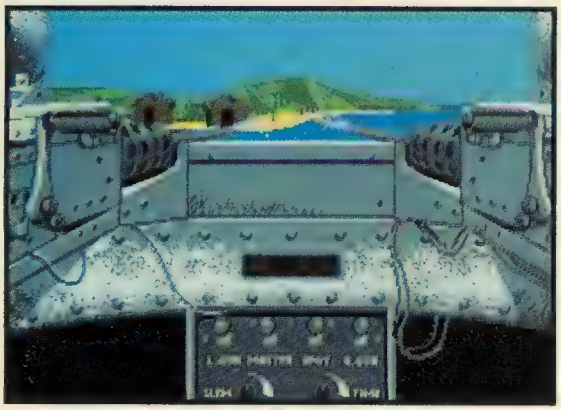
Loughry chose well. The riverine gunboats translate well into the *Steel Thunder* system. Fans of that remarkable earlier game will be glad to know that *Gunboat* preserves the same intense, behind-the-guns ambience. You can, in fact, customize your boat's armament, depending on the requirements of individual missions. The most dramatic point of view is from the bow-mounted twin .50 calibers — you seem to be perched out over the water, with nothing but a thin steel plate between you and the looming, sinister jungles on either bank.

Other weaponry includes an M129 automatic grenade launcher (which is great fun to shoot), a tripod-mounted mortar, and the faithful M-60 general purpose machine gun. If you really want to chew up a target, you can also bow-mount a GE M134 minigun — a six-barreled gatling-type weapon that spews 5,000 rounds per minute. The minigun is a murderous anti-personnel weapon, but unfortunately it is something of a flop in the context of this game — it bulks so awkwardly on the screen that it hides most of its target, and, graphically, the effects of its fire are disappointingly wimpy.

You begin your career in the Brown Water Navy with a tour of duty in Vietnam, which includes a wide variety of missions ranging from sampan-busting to the clandestine insertion of a Navy SEAL team deep in hostile territory. Once you've proven yourself in Southeast Asia, you can access a series of missions against



The reliable M-60 machine gun makes a good stern-mounted weapon.



Firing on friendly or civilian targets won't look good on your record, although you can make hamburger out of a water buffalo without being penalized.

insurgents in Panama — some game players may welcome this attempt to give the simulation contemporary relevance, while others may find these scenarios offensively jingoistic.

It's obvious that Accolade anticipated some controversy over *Gunboat* — the opening page of the game manual contains a lengthy rationale of the game's "realistic" depiction of dead, bleeding bodies. Although this is presented as though it were some kind of conceptual breakthrough, in fact it is not. There were plenty of bleeding corpses in *Steel Thunder* and nobody batted an eye. Nobody will in this game, either, and for the same reason: The coarse-grained images are about as realistic as stick figures, and the "blood and guts" amount to a couple of square red pixels. Big deal.

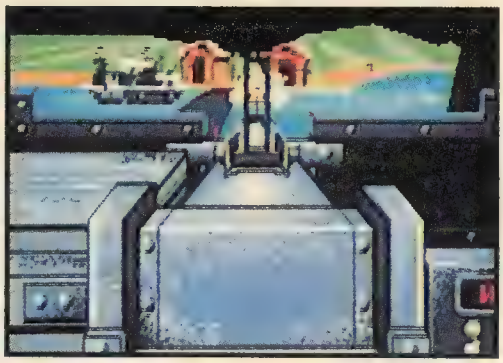
At its best, *Gunboat* generates the same kind of tension as those gripping river scenes in *Apocalypse Now* — the suspense of wondering what perils lie hidden just around the next bend. The battles are fast and furious, the missions challenging, and most of the production values are high.

And yet somehow the game seems just a little flat compared to its predecessor. Too many missions start from the same point on the map, for example, and after the third or fourth operation, you get awfully tired of seeing that same damned water buffalo standing on the bank. Even with the "time compression" option on, some missions seem to take forever to get cracking.

The graphics could have been better, too. The bitmapping of the riverbank scenery is so blocky that half the time you can't tell what you're shooting at until you get within 100 yards or so — suicidally close, in many cases. And, sorry, but a .50 caliber slug smashing into water throws up a *humongous* waterspout, not the dainty little pellet-rifle splashes depicted here. But most disappointing of all: *Where are the tracers?*

If you liked the war-movie immediacy of *Steel Thunder*, by all means give *Gunboat* a try, for it succeeds in more ways than it falls short. But a little less haste in rushing the game to market, and a little more flair with the graphics, would have made it an improvement on its predecessor, rather than a mere retooling.

GP



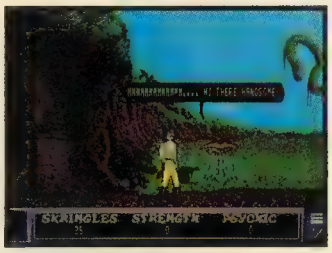
The automatic grenade launcher is excellent for taking out bunkers and sampans.

One of the nicer visual effects is the spotlight beam you can use during night missions.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, or CGA graphics; joystick recommended; supports sound boards.

THE KRISTAL

GARY MEREDITH



On this planet, even the flora has something to say. Too bad you can't seem to get the same loquacious response from the humans you meet.

Darkness has fallen over the Halls of Love, and a felony most foul is in progress within the chamber of the Kristal of Konos. The evil Malagar, servant of the Nameless One (whose name is Ono — figure that one out) is stealing the Kristal, a gift from the Lord of Light, the ruler of the Seven Planes. Malagar doesn't act alone; he is aided and abetted by the scorned Sisters of the Black Void.

Let's jump ahead a couple of deks. As the story goes, Malagar never made it back to Ono because he was lost in the treacherous Sea of Emotions. With the Kristal gone, chaos reigned in the Seven Planes to this day. But legend tells of Malvalla, who found the Kristal on the edge of time and hid it until a hero would come forth to restore the Kristal to its rightful place.

You're a bemused (or is it hungover?) Dancis Frake, located somewhere out in the boonies of Meltoca. Just how, you ask yourself, did you get here?

It's amazing the kinds of things you find written on the restroom walls of some dive on Meltoca. At least, you think that's where you read it. Could it be that there really is a Kristal of Konos? Of course, you've heard the legends all your life. But that's all they are — just legends. *Aren't they?*

In *The Kristal*, you are the somewhat-dashing Dancis Frake. As the game begins, you find yourself on a backwater planet, just awakening from some weird dream — or else you're suffering from one of the wildest lost weekends of your checkered past. Anyway, you must figure out just what you're doing on Meltoca, and why you feel so compelled to search through this low-rent part of the galaxy for a Kristal that may not exist.

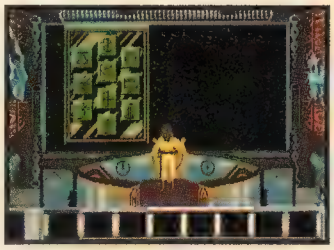
You start out with a few paltry skringles (the local currency) and practically no strength or psychic powers. So your first order of business is to fortify yourself with some food. The marketplace in the nearby town square should be just the place for a few munchies. Of course, that won't help you psychically. You're going to have to perform a couple of good deeds to improve your aura. Success in *The Kristal* depends largely on how well you're able to apply a few basic principles. One thing to remember is to save your progress often. It's not new advice for adventure fans, but it doesn't hurt to mention it again. In *The Kristal*, saving is especially important. There are a number of planets and situations for which inadequate preparation means certain death.

The marketplaces on most planets are ideal for loading up on a little nutrition for the strenuous activities ahead. And you can strengthen your psyche here by giving a few alms to the old man.

Another rule is to look at everything. Because many objects in this game appear only when you're standing next to them, this rule could be modified to "walk around everything." Some objects, such as keys, are absolutely necessary before you can proceed.

The final dictum is to talk to everyone and write it all down. For some reason, no one will repeat anything for you, so you'd better get the message the first time. Scattered throughout all the niceties are some valuable clues, so it really pays to be a good listener. For example, you'll definitely want to have a chat with Aunt Polly when you land on Zapminola.

Once you find your way back to your trusty ship, you'll discover that you can visit a number of planets. But be very wary, since some of these planets have wonderfully perverse atmospheric conditions that are sure to be the death of you.



Once aboard your ship, you'll want to be extremely careful when selecting destinations. For now, pick the second planet from the left on the top row. It's Zapminola, your old home planet.

Zapminola is your home planet, so you at least should have no worries about stepping onto the lava of its molten planetary surface.

You should, however, be aware that the name of Dancis Frake is not on the short list of Nobel Peace Prize nominees. Thus, you may meet folks whose past dealings with you were less than satisfactory. Some may even want to pick a fight with you. If you haven't been able to tank up on any complex carbohydrates prior to swordplay, you'll find that you're fighting a losing battle.

Unless you have an energy level of at least ten, you're pretty much doomed to being hacked to bits. All those skringles in your pocket aren't going to do you much good if they end up as booty for a former business partner. So buy food whenever possible — especially before going into unknown territory.

Game play in *The Kristal* is straightforward, whether you use the keyboard or a joystick. The function keys control access to your inventory, as well as to the text interface. Normally, you can talk to anyone who talks to you, although a few people will only want to fight. Unfortunately, once you've been challenged, there's no backing out. Though this may make you hesitant to speak with everyone, remember that the one guy you overlook will probably possess invaluable information.

Aboard your ship, the control functions of the keyboard or joystick shift. You can always count on being attacked in transit between planets, so it's a good idea to perfect your space battle technique early. For the most part, space battles are pretty simple affairs: Just take on your attackers one at a time. For maximum effectiveness, line your sights up with the flight axis of your target, and let him fly into your fire. If you take the time to zero in on a target using the flight controls, you may take too many hits and suffer irreparable damage.

The Kristal combines arcade action sequences with a basic role-playing adventure, and then glues the whole thing together with a nice sense of humor. It was one of the most popular games of 1989 in Europe, winning several major awards. If given half a chance, that success could be repeated in the U.S.

For gamers familiar with European, arcade-heavy, sci-fi graphic games from companies such as Psygnosis, *The Kristal* represents a different approach which more closely follows the American recipe of quest adventures from Sierra or Origin. So, stick your tongue firmly in your cheek and set out to find that darned Kristal. Somebody wants it just to fulfill some prophecy, but you figure there just might be some money in it for you.

It's understandable that several people on Zapminola know you. But scattered among the acquaintances are a few to whom you left some outstanding accounts on your last visit.

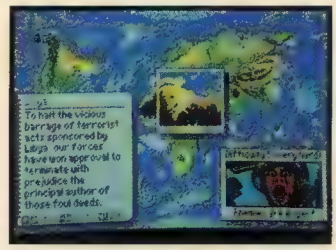
The King's Head Pub is a great place to wash the space dust from your throat — and an even better place for picking up some choice information.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick optional.

LHX ATTACK

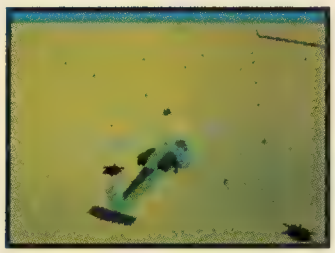
WILLIAM R. TROTTER



Combat missions can be flown in three global hot spots, at five levels of difficulty. Easy is probably all you can handle at first — or maybe for quite awhile.

Glasnost or no *glasnost*, you can bet your joystick that the KGB will get a copy of this program. The reason? The LHX (Light Helicopter, Experimental) is still so secret that no model of it has ever been seen by the public. Yet **Electronic Arts** is releasing a detailed, convincing flight simulator of this very aircraft.

Before you dial the number of your local FBI office, be advised that EA has simply zipped through a loophole in Pentagon security which allows specifications and general design parameters of many "top secret" projects to seep out via insiders' newsletters, bidding documents, articles in aviation journals, and so on. Nobody was supposed to know what the B-1 bomber looked like, either, but a plastic scale model of it was on the market before the plane was ever flown in public.



One of the program's nicest features is the wide variety of viewpoints you can select.

Culling their data from various public and "deep background" sources, EA has come up with a very plausible simulation of an extremely hot aircraft. The LHX is the most advanced military chopper flying. Instead of the vulnerable (even to rifle fire) tail rotor found on conventional helicopters, it has a ducted "tail fan." Extensive use of RAM ("radar absorbent materials"); triply-redundant digital/optical control systems; and the most advanced electronic countermeasures technology make the LHX the nimblest, fastest, and least-detectable attack helicopter ever flown.

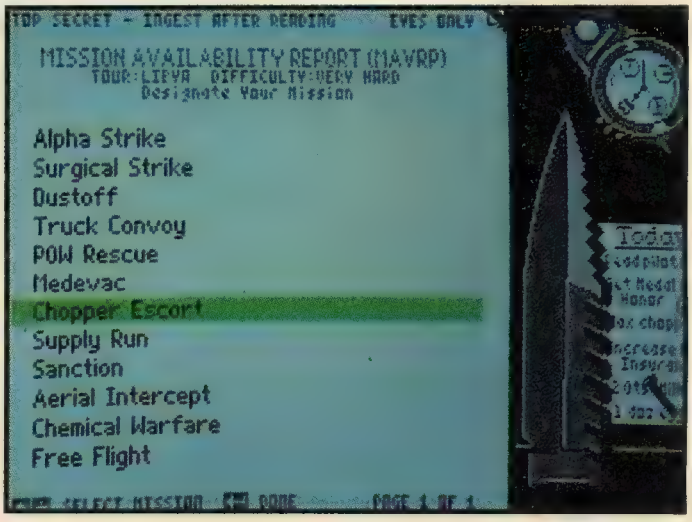
Flying the LHX, as you might suspect, takes more than a bit of practice, particularly in the low-altitude NOE (nap-of-the-earth) mode required to penetrate heavy enemy defenses. But everything you need to know is clearly laid out in the massive, heavily illustrated manual. While the aircraft responded well enough to keyboard and mouse control, the joystick — to no one's surprise — seemed easiest and most natural.

In addition to the LHX, the game lets you fly the more familiar Apache and Blackhawk choppers. While they aren't quite as sleek and sexy as the LHX, they too make for first-class simulations. For something really different, you can also fly the Bell/Boeing "Osprey," a tilt-wing VTOL aircraft that can hover, land, and take off like a chopper, but that can also fly level at speeds in excess of 400 mph.

Once you've spent some time in training flights (and it's suicidal to attempt a combat mission until you have), you can opt for a combat assignment in Libya, Vietnam, or East Germany. There are five levels of difficulty, ranging from very easy to extremely hairy. Most players, however, will find the very easy missions dangerous enough, thank you!

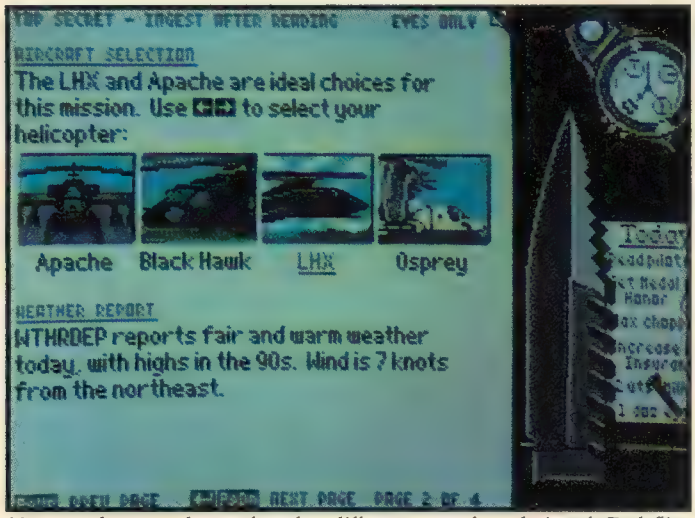
Desktop pilots who've logged their hours only in conventional fixed-wing planes may find these choppers disconcertingly tricky to manage at first. It's fairly easy to fly straight and fast at "high" altitudes (anything over 1,000 feet for these birds!), but if you fly that way, the enemy will swarm over you like flies on a rib roast.

Put in some time practic-



There are many different kinds of missions, some requiring stealth and hot-shot piloting, others requiring lots of firepower.

CHOPPER


AIRCRAFT SELECTION
The LHX and Apache are ideal choices for this mission. Use ◄► to select your helicopter:
Apache
Black Hawk
LHX
Osprey
WEATHER REPORT
WTHRDEP reports fair and warm weather today, with highs in the 90s. Wind is 7 knots from the northeast.

You can select your chopper from four different types of attack aircraft. Each flies differently enough from the others to make for a new experience.

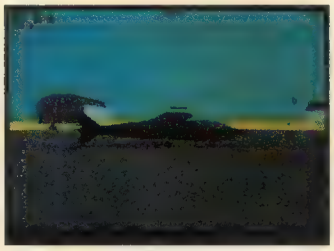
ing low altitude nap-of-the-earth flying. Take off at full thrust; cut to half-thrust before you reach 100 feet; point the chopper toward its objective; and then push the controller to the forward position. Remember that if you accelerate a helicopter while moving forward, the craft will rise. So just take it easy, keep your eye on the altimeter, make little adjustments of thrust as necessary, and don't run into any mountains or tall trees.

Each of these aircraft handles differently, but all of them are vulnerable to sudden thermal updrafts when they're flying low. This is a serious danger in the Libyan scenarios — you can be flying along serenely one second, then plunging toward the ground the next. Quick responses alone can save you when this happens.

The menu of possible missions is pleasingly varied, allowing you to choose some operations that require stealth and some that are pure bang-bang. EA's graphics are stylized but beautifully consistent with the feel of the game, and the animation is splendid. Missile and cannon effects are very good — especially the tracers fired at night, which make a real pyrotechnic splash when they impact.

The combat-heavy missions are quite exciting, with enemy surface-to-air missiles whizzing past, flak shells bursting all around, and bullet holes spider-webbing your windshield. It requires both dexterity and speed to control the aircraft while dodging enemy fire, but if you can tolerate getting shot down a few times, you'll soon get the hang of it.

In fact, for such a big, complex simulator, *LHX* offers a nearly ideal blend of challenge and reward — even the failed missions are so gripping that you'll want to play again and again. And, of course, each time you do, you'll get a little more proficient at piloting ... and surviving.

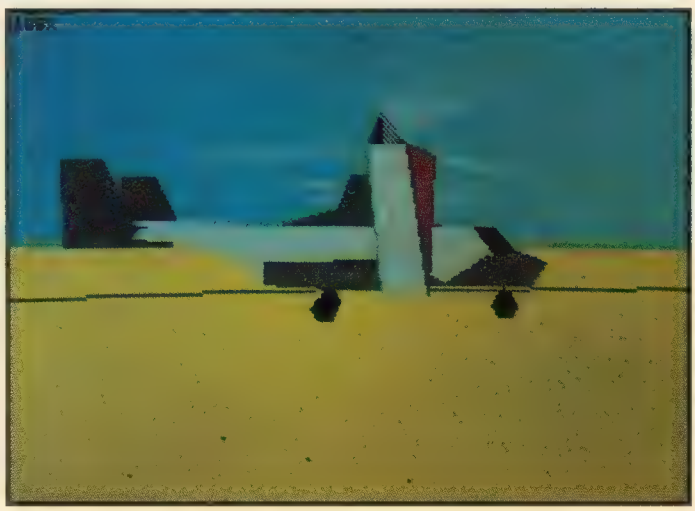


EA's concept of the top-secret LHX seems plausible and convincing — these folks did their homework very well.

EA has included a number of pleasing little extras, too. Foremost among them is the wide assortment of viewpoints you can key up on your screen. You can follow your chopper from behind, peer down at the action from above, observe your own strafing runs from the target's point of view, or ride any fired missile from the moment of hardpoint launch to the microsecond before impact.

The excellent documentation includes reliable and fascinating tips on the theory and practice of helicopter tactics. All in all, *LHX* is quite a package — it may well become a classic of its kind.

GP



For a novel flying experience, slip into the cockpit of the tilt-winged Osprey, a hybrid design with many interesting properties.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory (640K for VGA graphics); VGA, EGA, or CGA graphics; joystick and mouse optional.

PANZER

NEIL RANDALL

If there has been one constant running through two decades of board war gaming, it's been the popularity of games set on World War II's Russian Front. Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, began a four-year struggle between two gigantic armies in a campaign that established both the importance of tanks and the impossibility of weather control. While German tanks blew huge holes in the Soviet line, they were stopped just short of Moscow by an even greater force, the Russian winter.

As the Korsun scenario begins, the gray German units find themselves in a terrible strategic sit uation against a strong Soviet force (in red). Here, the 113th regiment of 1st Panzer prepares to engage the enemy.

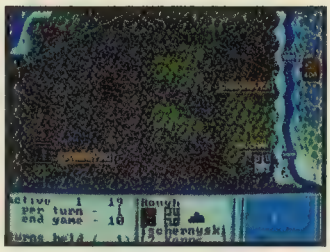
The sheer scope of this campaign (called the Great Patriotic War by Soviet historians) has fascinated war gamers since the release of the board game *Stalingrad* 25 years ago. In the late 60s, though, Avalon Hill introduced a board game called *Panzerblitz*, and player fascination shifted from the strategies involved in conquering the Soviet Union to the tactics necessary to win single battles.

Panzer Battles, the latest in SSG's continuing Battlefront series, takes computer gamers into that same Russian front. Its six scenarios cover battles ranging from Minsk (1941) to Korsun (1944), each with its own military units. As the game's title suggests, the emphasis in the game is on armored warfare, but tanks are not the exclusive domain of these scenarios.

The point of the entire Battlefront system has been to demonstrate the primacy of combined arms in battles from the American Civil War through the Korean War, and *Panzer Battles* is certainly no different. Nor is it any different in its user interface. By now the Battlefront menu system is standard enough to allow for two user's manuals, one covering the basic game system and one detailing the scenarios for the specific game — anyone who has played a Battlefront game can jump right into the action.

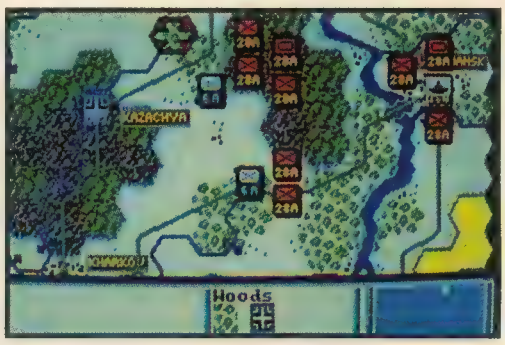
The basic game is structured around menus that appear on the right side of every screen. Game play consists of flipping from menu to menu in order to choose the commands for the units on the map. By using the menus, you can move the cursor around the map; get detailed reports on your units and their status; move your headquarters into a better location from which to issue commands; and order your units to probe, assault, or retreat.

But for those who haven't seen an SSG game for awhile, one thing has changed dramatically. The graphics are now extremely attractive — so much so that players who cut their teeth on the beautiful maps included in such board games as *Squad Leader*, *Terrible Swift Sword*, or *Hell's Highway* will find themselves fascinated by the look of the battlefield. Changed, too, is the look of the unit counters, which are now even more attractive than those included in almost any board game.



At the top of the Kharkov scenario map, the Soviet force seems far too large to handle. The Germans will have to make exceptionally good use of the surrounding terrain and will have to retreat to the southwest.

Among the more interesting features of *Panzer Battles* — and, in fact, all its Battlefront cousins — is that it allows you to create your own scenarios. If you're historically inclined and your favorite armored battle is not included in the package,

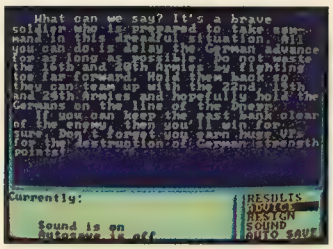


Not many Soviets are in the Grigorovka area, but getting to any of them is going to be difficult. Rough terrain and forests bar the way to an easy assault, and the roads aren't all that reliable.

The Moscow scenario has a small map, but look at the density of its units! With all the towns littering the map, getting through the Soviet defenses is going to be no picnic. Or maybe it's the Soviets who'll be going through the German defenses.

you can create a map, unit counters, and game situation through a series of detailed menus. Or, if you simply want to change one of the existing scenarios, you can edit it according to your own research. SSG sells its own add-on scenarios in a house publication called "Run 5," so those needing more scenarios can expand their original game without investing the time needed to create them.

To play *Panzer Battles*, it is necessary to understand what the system is trying to accomplish. The screen shows square unit counters representing the forces that actually fought in the battle in various locations on the battlefield map. The map


What can we say? It's a brave soldier who is prepared to take command in this dreadful situation. All you can do is delay the German advance for as long as possible. Do not waste the 16th and 20th Armies by fighting too far forward. Hold them back so they can team up with the 22nd, 49th and 28th Armies and hopefully hold the Germans on the line of the Dnepr. If you can keep the east bank clear of the enemy, then you'll win for sure. Don't forget you earn huge VPs for the destruction of German strength points!
Currently:
Sound is on
RESULTS
ORDERS
DESIGN
SOUND
AUTO SAVE

As the Minsk scenario begins, this depressing advice is dispensed to the commander of the Soviet side. Pay attention to the beginning of the second paragraph because that's where your true strategy lies.

is divided into hexagons, which you can see only when you select "Map Walk" and move the cursor around. Basically, combat occurs between units occupying adjacent grids.

Unlike many computer war games, in *Panzer Battles* you don't move your combat units one by one. Instead, you play the role of overall commander (you're represented by a headquarters unit), and you issue orders to groups of units (divisions, typically). You won't, for example, move each unit forward toward a crucial location; you'll issue an "Objective" command to the entire division — or even an entire corps — assigning it to take the desired hexagon. When one of your divisions closes in on an enemy division, you can order it to probe, prepare for assault, assault, or exploit an advantage. And so on.

In other words, you play a *specific role* in this game, and the system doesn't allow you to deviate from that role. As in all the Battlefront games, this limitation is generally beneficial, but occasionally your lack of control (true to history, but not to most war games) is frustrating. You'll find yourself — especially as you begin playing — simply cycling through the unit counters, finding out what the computer has assigned them to do, and sticking with it because it seems like the best choice. Only after several moves do your options become apparent. But even then you'll sometimes be dying to put your fingers on an individual unit and push it to another place on the map.

Despite the limited control over your units, however, and despite the fact that SSG has chosen not to include its gorgeous tactical maps with the game package, *Panzer Battles* offers a rich variety of options to those interested in some truly gripping historic battles.

Prokhorovka: the largest tank battle in history. On this one small portion of the map, you can see enough armor to scare anyone away. In many ways, this is the most exciting scenario of the six because movement is fluid and battle is decisive.

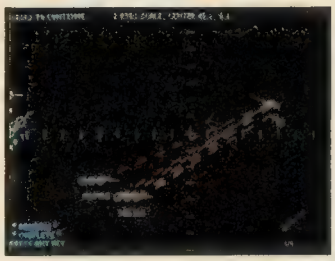
Whether participating in the Battle of Moscow, in which the German army was stopped just short of its goal, or Prokhorovka, history's largest tank battle, you'll find yourself pouring over the maps searching for the best strategy again and again. *Panzer Battles* is endlessly replayable, and — especially with added scenarios — should interest any gamer for a long time.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, or Hercules graphics.

SPECIAL BUYER'S GUIDE SECTION

Action Stations!



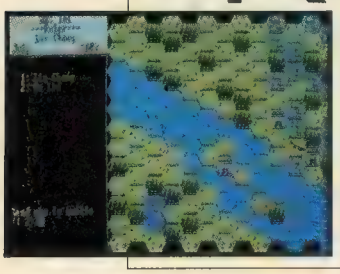
Action Stations! was created by Commander Alan D. Zimm, a career Navy officer who now serves as the executive officer of a cruiser. This excellent naval simulation covers all the warships of every major power from 1922 to 1945.

Since the outcome of naval engagements can be influenced by the tiniest details, Zimm has factored in a tremendous amount of data and organized it into this realistic and elegant game system. Battles are shown on a screen modeled after those found in the Combat Information Centers of naval warships. Maneuvers, targeting, and damage control are handled via drop-down menus.

Players who enjoy showy graphics may be disappointed by the spartan appearance of this game, but if authenticity is important to you, and if you want to know what it is really like to command a warship, *Action Stations!* is the perfect game for you.

Conflict Analytics

Bandit Kings of Ancient China



Koei's latest epic game again explores the Oriental world of power and mystery.

In *Bandit Kings*, the setting is medieval China during the Song dynasty at the start of the 12th century. Emperor Hui Zhong is preoccupied by the threat of a barbarian invasion. But in his own court, the Imperial Minister of War, Gai Qiu, poses an even greater threat.

You take the role of one of the Good Fellows — outlaw chieftains who supported the emperor and pledged to kill Gai Qiu. Using the familiar Koei game system, you take turns with the computer on a path that could lead to success, but could just as easily result in your bloody death.

The variety of scenarios guarantee a fresh game every time.

Koei

Battles of Napoleon

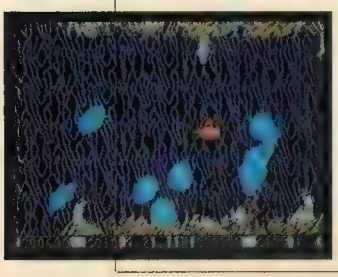
Experience the Napoleonic era in all its glory with SSI's *Battles of Napoleon*. You can choose to re-create military engagements on the battlefields of Borodino, Auerstadt, Quatre Bras, and Waterloo, or use the construction program to create your own maps, armies, and conquests. A random option even lets you create computer-generated battles.

This simulation earns high marks for including the many influences on battles of this era. Terrain, unit formations, cumulative fatigue, firing expertise, morale, efficiency, and leadership all contribute to the outcome of each battle. Additionally, a "command control" option rates leaders on everything from melee strength to ammunition supplied.

Once you wade through the extensive game manual, your efforts will be rewarded by hours of enjoyable game play.

SSI

Blood Money



After a hohum vacation, you decide to go on an Alien Safari: an exploration of four perilous planets from which no one has ever returned. You crave action regardless of the consequences.

And action is what you'll get in *Blood Money*. Like the original Amiga version, the PC translation is full of striking, yet dangerous, aliens. You meet these creatures head-on in one of the four vehicles supplied by the safari organizers. You'll fly by helicopter on Gibba, use a submarine on Grone, pull out your jetpack on Shreek, and crawl into a spaceship on Snuff. As you destroy aliens, you're rewarded with coins which enable you to buy weapons.

Two gamers can play simultaneously — and will probably get much further as a team than either could individually.

Psygnosis

Breach 2

As an Ensign squad leader, you have your eye on career advancement. A few successful missions are all that lie between you and your dream of becoming Fleet Admiral of the Federated World's Special Forces.

You have nine men in your squad, and the better they perform, the better you'll look to your superiors. In six missions, you must whip the squad into shape as you rescue prisoners, kill opponents, and destroy data packs.

Each of your soldiers has a limited number of moves based on the weaponry and armor he carries. You must decide where best to place each soldier and what he should carry.

Breach 2 is a game for the detail-oriented. It takes an organized mind to program each soldier's moves rather than jumping in with both feet in a blaze of firepower.

Omnitrend

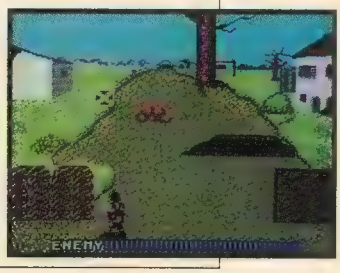
Cabal

Cabal is a good example of a game that has risen to a leading position in a crowded field. The strength of this arcade-action game is that it plays as though it were designed with the PC's peculiarities in mind. It responds smoothly to any good joystick, and the player is lured into game after game by the conviction that *this* time he will move on to the next level.

You control an anti-terrorist superwarrior battling through many levels of foes who are equipped with everything from tanks to submarines. A helpful graph across the bottom of the screen gives the number of enemy targets remaining on a particular screen. And as you progress, power-up weapons increase your arsenal.

Cabal is fairly tough to beat, but it offers intense action with pleasing graphics — one of the best arcade games available for PCs.

Capcom



Champions of Krynn

Those following the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons games will welcome this latest addition, which is set in the world of Dragonlance. Evil forces are plotting to put Takhisis, the dark queen, on the throne of Krynn. Can the forces of good stop them?

Before you enter combat, you must choose a six-character team from the races of hill dwarf, mountain dwarf, Silvanesti elf, Qualinesti elf, half-elf, kender, and human. Each player has an ability score for strength, intelligence, wisdom, dexterity, constitution, and charisma. Your party members can be clerics, fighters, rangers, Solamnic knights, mages, or thieves.

Champions of Krynn includes five levels of difficulty, a new feature in AD&D games. And the graphics and game play are as enjoyable as players have come to expect from the AD&D series of games.

SSI

Clue Master Detective

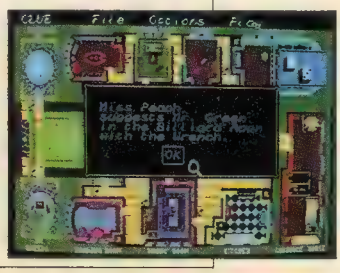
Gadzooks! Mr. Boddy has been murdered! Whodunnit? Where? And what weapon was used? The answers are up to you.

There are 10 suspects, 12 locations, and 8 weapons. You must discover the truth before your fellow players, or the computer, beat you to it.

This computer version of the popular game of criminal detection offers all the features of the board game, but adds more suspects, locations, and weapons, as well as graphics and sound. The process of elimination is naturally your primary strategy in solving the mystery, but wise players will use more than one approach.

Secret passages and a "snooping" feature make things even more interesting. You can also be assured (since the computer holds the cards) that none of your fellow players will be able to cheat.

Leisure Genius



SPECIAL BUYER'S GUIDE SECTION

Conquests of Camelot

Conquests of Camelot combines Arthurian legends with Celtic folklore in a charming game that's rich with detail. As the story begins, King Arthur's soul is so troubled over the love between his wife, Gwenhyver, and his favorite knight, Sir Launcelot, that a blight has fallen over the land.

To save the kingdom, Arthur sends three brave knights on a quest to find the Holy Grail. When none of the knights return, Arthur is left with no choice but to make the journey himself.

As you work through the plot, you must collect clues, master arcade sequences, and solve riddles and puzzles. But to save the kingdom, you will also have to make a number of moral choices.

The illumination-style graphics enhance the fantasy, and careful attention to detail almost brings King Arthur's court to life.

Sierra

The Cycles

Join the International Grand Prix racing circuit and enjoy 15 of the world's best motorcycle courses. Go for top speed on the straightaways of West Germany or England, or test your skills on the twisting tracks of Holland and Japan.

You have your choice of machines before each race, and a practice mode helps you to get acquainted with both cycle and track before you become one of a ten-man field. You also decide how many laps are in each race. Five difficulty settings determine whether gear shiftings are manual or automatic, whether your fellow cyclists go for blood or avoid you, and whether you can do wheelies or spin out.

Handling is a key skill in this game — it's not easy to control your cycle on the hairpin curves. But regardless of your skill level, the combination of graphics and thoughtful features make for a satisfying game.

Accolade

David Wolf: Secret Agent

Like James Bond, secret agent David Wolf is a superspy who seems to be at home in any situation. It's a good thing, too, because flying a hang glider equipped with missiles doesn't come easily to most people. Neither does flying a stealth jet, parachuting onto a moving truck, or dropping oil from a speeding sports car.

As Wolf, you'll take on dangerous agents determined to undermine the democracies of the world. And then there's the small matter of the kidnapping of a famous scientist's beautiful daughter.

David Wolf: Secret Agent is an advanced interactive adventure with action similar to a movie. You'll almost always be involved in a chase scene or other arcade action escapade. If you are looking for fast-paced excitement, this may be the game for you.

Dynamix

Don't Go Alone

It took just one look at the Ancient One to drive your grandfather stark raving mad. Now you must save the family name by finding this evil apparition and putting it in its place — wherever that is.

You have assembled a qualified crew to explore a dark house that brims with paranormal activity. The crew consists of four specialists: a technician, a chemist, a psychic, and an adventurer. As they collect objects, search for clues, solve mysteries, and battle monsters, their experience levels and abilities increase.

Each team member carries a notebook holding up to 25 formulas essential to defeating demons. Each person also has a fear level and a concentration level, both of which must be carefully monitored. These levels go up and down based on encounters with the ghosts of the house.

Don't Go Alone is a strategy game with a creative premise and a plot to challenge anyone ready for an adventure.

Accolade

Double Dragon II: The Revenge

More than 20 different tough guys are waiting to get their hands on you in this sequel to *Double Dragon*. As the game begins, Billy Lee's girlfriend, Marian, has evidently been killed after an attack by the Black Shadow Warriors. Now brothers Billy and Jimmy are fighting together to avenge Marian's death.

They're eager to try out their new weapons on the Warriors, and you can be sure that the two Lee brothers won't be showing any mercy. They'll use dynamite, shovels, a ball and chain — or just rely on their martial arts expertise to put their enemies out of action.

Five new scenarios (including a mountain top and a factory) set the stage. And by playing with a friend, you can double your chances of defeating the gang of Black Shadow Warriors.

Virgin Mastertronic

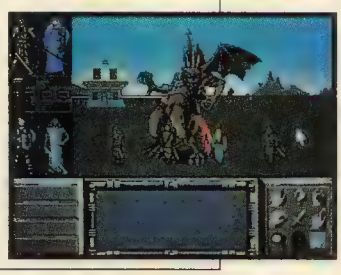
Drakkhen

Drakkhen, Data East's first fantasy role-playing game, is packed with features. Detailed graphics on a 3-D landscape set the scene for the drama which unfolds in real-time — for example, the sun sets at the end of the day, at which point your party must sleep or be overcome with fatigue.

Each scene in the game has its own musical score, and each of the more than 150 monsters has its own theme. If spell-casting is your forte, you've got more than 200 with which to experiment.

Of course, there's a quest, and it revolves around four warriors in search of the dragon who can restore the world's magic. A great deal of detail has gone into both the magical and fighting aspects of the game.

Data East



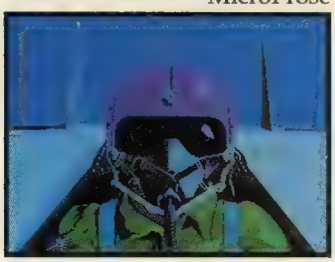
F-15 Strike Eagle II

MicroProse has updated their best-selling *F-15 Strike Eagle* by incorporating elements of the original game with the award-winning 3-D graphics system of *F-19 Stealth Fighter*. The result is a new game which may look familiar, but which plays very differently than either of the other two games.

Based on a plane designed for both dogfighting and ground attacks, the simulation offers missions which require the pilot to destroy or navigate through swarms of enemy aircraft before hitting ground targets.

The action takes place in four international scenarios — Libya, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and the Middle East. Since there are hundreds of primary and secondary targets, you'll rarely get the same mission twice.

MicroProse



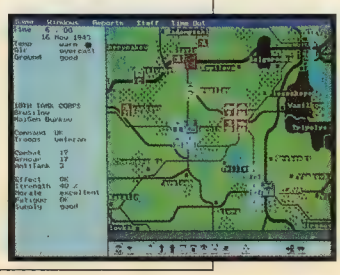
Fire-Brigade: The Battle for Kiev

Fight a pivotal battle of World War II with *Fire-Brigade*. Historically, this battle between the Germans and Soviets might be considered an impasse, but you can decide the outcome once and for all. Choose your side, then deal with logistics, battle fatigue, raw recruits, depleted tank forces, and the rapid approach of winter, among other problems.

You can enter the fray at several points, and each point has unique strategic problems. You can plan your battle down to the last detail, or just set objectives and let your trained staff work everything out.

The variety of game options allows you to use as little or as much detail as you wish and still experience the excitement of battle.

Panther Games



SPECIAL BUYER'S GUIDE SECTION

The Fool's Errand

If you like a good puzzle, you'll love *The Fool's Errand*. More than 30 types of mazes, jigsaws, cryptograms, and anagrams await you in this puzzle within a puzzle within a puzzle.

As the fool, your job is to solve more than 80 mind benders, and figuring out the object of some of these puzzles is a challenge. Though the game gives a hint for every puzzle, sometimes just coming up with a starting point is difficult.

But each solved puzzle is part of a larger enigma. Read the scrolls before each puzzle, and collect the map piece that each solved puzzle earns for you, and you'll be able to put together the story of the fool's search for wisdom.

Excellent graphics combine with an intricate storyline and an abundance of wit in this delightful game.

Miles Computing

Ghostbusters II

That ghostbusting quartet still ain't 'fraid of no ghosts — but the rest of New York is. Slime activity is up, and the ghostbusters have jobs everywhere from the waterfront to downtown department stores.

Use the bucks these jobs earn to stay in business, but save enough so that Egon can build a slime blower to control the ghosts. You also have to collect slime samples, discover which music soothes the slime, and then use the music to send the Statue of Liberty for a walk through town. If you fail any of these tasks, a 16th-century tyrant will escape the painting that confines him and wreak havoc on the city.

This game is difficult to master, yet addictive and enjoyable to play.

Activision

Gold of the Americas

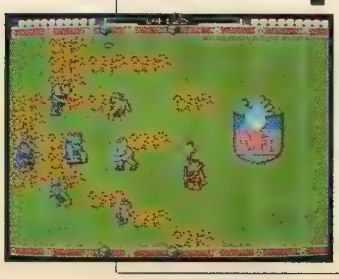
Travel back to a time when adventurous folk dreamed of discovering new lands. *Gold of the Americas* is a strategy game that lets you control England, France, Portugal, or Spain as they colonize the New World.

The action takes place between 1500 and 1800, and each game consists of 30 moves by each nation. Up to four may play, or you may compete against the computer. You choose historic or random scenarios, and set the difficulty level as well. Your goal is to end the game as the country with the most colonies in the New World. To succeed, you'll have to balance your treasury, secret funds, armies, colonists, trading ships, warships, privateers, slaves, and explorers.

Though its options may seem limited to experienced gamers, *Gold of the Americas* provides a good introduction to strategy gaming for beginning and intermediate players.

SSG

Grave Yardage



It's gory, it's gruesome — it's football at its worst. You won't be penalized for holding, interference, or even *killing* the quarterback. None of those effete rules apply here. When your players are dwarfs, ogres, zombies, trolls, and the like, the only penalties are for littering the field with body parts, boring the fans, or prematurely crossing the line of scrimmage.

Your gridiron consists of grass, weeds, mud, and randomly placed land mines. By the end of the game, the field has more craters than the moon. And your official MFL (Monster Football League) ball is a cyclops' eye with wings and an ignorant mind of its own.

Get ready for lots of gore — these players literally fight to the death. This is no football simulation; it's mayhem wrapped in pigskin trappings.

Activision

THE ANSWERS YOU NEED

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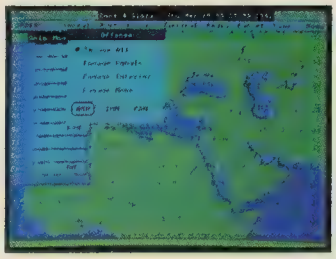
SPECIAL BUYER'S GUIDE SECTION

Guns and Glory



This massively detailed game of naval grand strategy focuses on the Atlantic and Mediterranean theaters. The player commands the British, German, French or Italian navies in five historic. World War II scenarios and one fantasy scenario that assumes the war didn't begin until 1944.

This "war delayed" scenario is very interesting, since it presumes the implementation of Admiral Raeder's scheme to make the *Kriegsmarine* into a full-scale fleet, once the powerful "Z Plan" designs and the carrier *Graf Zeppelin* were operational. The Royal Navy, too, is stronger in this scenario, with more carriers and the super-battleship HMS *Vanguard* added to its inventory.

Historic scenarios include the Norway campaign, the Mediterranean campaign, the Murmansk convoys, and a fascinating re-creation of the *Scharnhorst / Gniesenau* chase.

Britannica

Hardball II

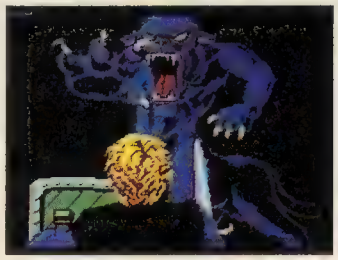
With more than one-half million games sold, *Hardball* was a monster hit. Its sequel takes the best features of that hit and adds several new ones.

For example, there's a team editor feature that lets you invent any team imaginable. And once you have your team ready, this new game is also more playable. Throws from the outfield are faster, and the infielders now play key defense. A statistics feature compiles and displays figures on all aspects of play.

The simulation is quite accurate, giving excellent control over pitches and swings and allowing you to use complex pitching strategies. Hitting also offers a variety of options, including hitting high, low, inside, outside, bunting, grounding, and, of course, homers.

Accolade

Hero's Quest I: So You Want to Be a Hero



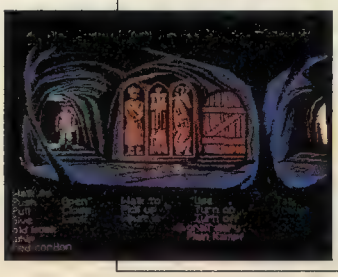
What type of hero would you like to be — magician, fighter, or thief? You've got your choice in Sierra's latest quest game.

After choosing your character, you must develop his attributes, from wisdom to dexterity. Your imagination and your ability to think strategically determine the effectiveness of your hero. Distribute your 50 points carefully. For example, a thief needs stealth and lock-picking skills, a magician needs magic and intelligence, and a fighter needs strength and weapons ability.

The action begins in Spielburg, a land that has fallen on hard times. A band of brigands is causing more than a little trouble, and more importantly, the baron's son, daughter, and court jester have been lost to the enchantment of the evil Baba Yaga. You'll only earn the title "hero" if you can venture into the forests of Spielburg and return the enchanted captives to their homes.

Sierra

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade



Archaeologist Dr. Indiana Jones is off on another adventure, but this one is particularly important: He must find his father, Henry, who disappeared while trying to recover the Holy Grail.

As Indy, you'll search through Italy, Germany, and the Middle East trying to recover the legendary Grail before the Nazis can get their hands on it. You will have to use wit as well as wisdom to get very far.

Since it's based on the movie of the same name, many of the scenes will be familiar to fans of the film trilogy, and inside jokes are found throughout the game. What will Indy do with the Grail when he finds it? In the game, you determine the outcome.

The game is available in two versions — the Graphics Adventure is more text-oriented, and the Action Adventure is for arcade fans.

Lucasfilm

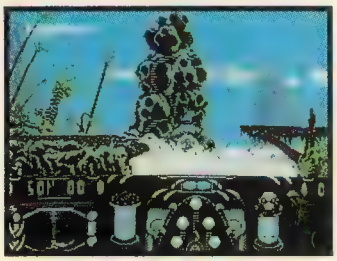
Knight Force

Before his death, Helias, the late King of Belloth, left the secret of time travel with the Knight of Thunder. But when Red-Sabbath, the world's most evil and powerful sorcerer, kidnaps Princess Tanya, the knight seems to be trapped. Will he hand over the secret?

As the Knight of Thunder, you must travel through five areas of time and space — Prehistoric, New York, Future, Versailles, and Mystical — to collect five amulets, each of which can be used only in its particular time. These magical amulets are the key to the knight's ultimate victory in Red-Sabbath's castle of doom.

In each zone the knight must defeat Red-Sabbath's clones, along with a number of other nasty creatures. The game play and graphics in this adventure are for beginners — more experienced players might find it tedious.

Titus



Lakers Versus Celtics and the NBA Playoffs

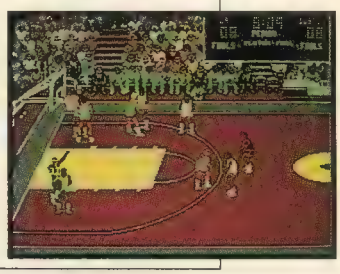
The first NBA-licensed five-on-five game features eight of 1989's NBA playoff teams, as well as one of 1990's all-star squads. Your team choices include the Celtics, Bulls, Pistons, and Knicks from the Eastern Conference; and the Lakers, Sonics, Suns, and Jazz from the Western Conference.

Your game includes all the rules of basketball, such as offensive fouls, 24-second clock violations, and one-and-one free throws. And you'll recognize your favorite players by their physical appearance as well as their playing styles.

Sound effects ranging from the swish of the net to the bounce of the ball add to the fun. And you can choose variable skill levels, a practice mode, or play with a friend.

This is one of the best PC basketball games we've seen.

Electronic Arts



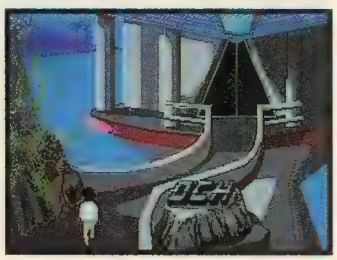
Leisure Suit Larry III: Passionate Patti In Pursuit of Pulsating Pectorals

All is not well in leisureland. Larry has lost both his job and his wife. And even though Larry is a first class jerk, he deserves credit for resilience. In no time at all, he's once again cruising for chicks in sleazy bars.

The action takes place on Nontoonyt Island, a resort full of enticing women. After several close encounters of the feminine kind, Larry meets the woman of his dreams — Passionate Patti. She is beautiful, and — amazingly enough — she falls for Larry, too.

Like the other *Leisure Suit Larry* games, this one is designed for adults, and the risque humor may offend some. But the captivating adventure has excellent graphics, a lot of imagination, and Sierra's trademark humor.

Sierra



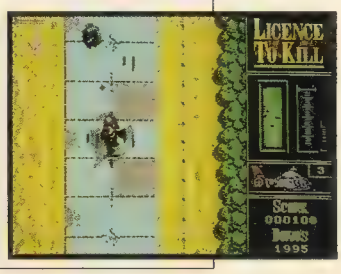
Licence to Kill

What does it take to earn a license to kill? Maybe a better question would be, "What does it take to get your license revoked?" As James Bond, you've had a license to kill for years. But when your best friend's bride is murdered, you're deemed too personally involved to handle the case. But you have other ideas, license or no license. And they all involve revenge.

Your self-appointed mission is to catch the man behind the murder — a drug czar named Sanchez. The game consists of six chase scenes, all in different locales and vehicles. You'll water-ski barefooted, fly a helicopter, trek on foot, head underwater, and more. Meanwhile, Sanchez will be attempting to escape by airplane, seaplane, and 18-wheeler.

Based on scenes from the movie of the same name, *Licence to Kill* is filled with exciting arcade-style action.

DoMark



SPECIAL BUYER'S GUIDE SECTION

the Manhole

You begin *the Manhole*, naturally enough, standing by a manhole. But when you click on the manhole, a giant beanstalk starts to grow. Click on the beanstalk, and you'll automatically climb its height. The charm of this exploration game lies in investigating the strange worlds above and below the manhole. There are no wrong moves, no winners, and no losers. The fun is in just searching through the new world and its strange inhabitants.

Almost everything in the graphically detailed game makes a sound, moves, or leads you to further exploration. Designed mostly for children — though adults will love it, too — the game is full of friendly and amusing creatures. There's a dragon who offers you a biscuit, warmed to a crisp if you prefer. Or if you're thirsty, you could take tea with a rabbit. Would you like to speak French with a turtle? Then *the Manhole* is the game for you.

Activision

Manhunter 2: San Francisco

Your old nemesis, Phil, has moved his murderous spree from New York to San Francisco. And you have to stop this Rat King once and for all.

Once you assume the role of a recently deceased Manhunter, you can get closer to Phil and the rest of the evil Orbs. Before long, you realize the Orbs are up to their same old plans — to enslave humanity and lay waste to the Earth.

The game takes place over the course of three days. Before you can start a new day, you must complete the requirements of the previous day. As in most Sierra quest games, you will need to be careful not to miss any clues. But there's a Manhunter Assistance Device to give you views of crime participants and other contacts.

Manhunter 2 is rather gory and difficult. But it's also an intriguing game that will test your ability to solve mysteries.

Sierra

Mean Streets

Famous scientist Carl Linsky is dead. The police have labeled his jump from the Golden Gate Bridge a suicide, but Linsky's beautiful daughter, Sylvia, believes it was murder. So she hires you, Tex Murphy, P.I., to uncover the truth. It won't take you long to figure out that what appeared to be a suicide is actually part of an enormous conspiracy.

The first pieces of the puzzle fall into place after you question your informant, Lee Chin. Hop in your well-equipped Lotus Speeder to search for a variety of characters and locations. Take everything that is not nailed down, and question everyone you meet. Don't be afraid to use bribery — or physical force.

With *Mean Streets*, computer games come closer to true interactive play. Its VGA graphics are fantastic, and its RealSound audio brings acceptable sound quality to the PC.

Access

Menace

In *Menace*, your mission is to destroy the evil planet Draconia. Your commanders have decided that using an entire space fleet to accomplish this would be too costly — both in ships and casualties — but your short-range fighter might have a chance of approaching the planet undetected.

The plan is for you to be delivered to Draconia hidden inside a giant space slug. Once you're released from the slug, your mission really begins. Six guardians protect the planet, and each one is responsible for a particular zone. When you have defeated all six guardians, the planet will have no defenses.

After alien creatures around the planet are defeated, you can use your ship's matter converter to turn their debris into your weaponry. You'll need *a lot* of weaponry, too, but be careful — if you lose your ship, you have to build your weapons systems all over again.

Psygnosis

MicroLeague Wrestling

OK, all you wrestling maniacs, here's the game for you. Compete against Hulk Hogan as Randy Savage or Ted DiBiase. Or just strap on the championship belt as Hulk Hogan himself. You'll be a part of the total wrestling picture with all its unpredictable moments—game interviews, ring introductions, theme songs, crowd support, and ringside interference.

After choosing your character, select your moves from a menu which appears next to a view of the ring. Each wrestler has a total of ten possible moves, ranging from basic stomping and kicking to super moves like Hulk's legbomb. Moves are carried out on the screen using footage from actual matches.

MicroLeague Wrestling will entertain wrestling fans, but there are only two matchups. To wrestle more opponents you must buy *Super Stars Wrestler* disks.

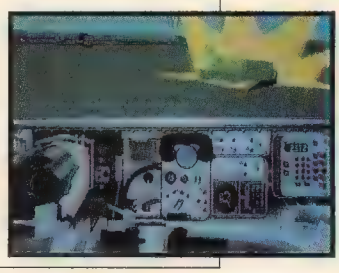
MicroLeague Sports

M-1 Tank Platoon

Unlike most tank simulators, which only let you command one vehi-cle, *M-1 Tank Platoon* permits you to control the entire battlefield environment and command whole units. Your platoon consists of four Abrams main battle tanks, crewed by a total of 16 men. As you battle, you can switch not only from position to position within a single tank, but also from tank to tank in order to complete your objective to the best of your ability.

Numerous options allow you to battle under a wide variety of weather, terrain, and enemy conditions. With an unusually large number of possible commands, this simulation is extraordinarily thorough, and though it takes some time and practice to become proficient, the realistic results of your efforts are well worth it.

MicroProse



Neuromancer

Based on William Gibson's cyberpunk novel of the same title, *Neuromancer* is a gritty role-playing adventure in which you explore a technologically terrifying future.

You are a cyberspace cowboy, one of the brave pioneers who dares to traverse the dangerous unknowns in society's vast telecommunications networks. As you search restaurants, hotels, and pawn shops looking for leads regarding the disappearance of your fellow cowboys, you talk to people, operate the PAX system, and hook up to various databases. You must also trade money and skill chips (and, eventually, your own body parts) for information and assistance.

But gathering information isn't enough. Your skills and sacrifices will finally allow you to enter cyberspace, where the action really begins. Are you ready for the challenge?

Interplay

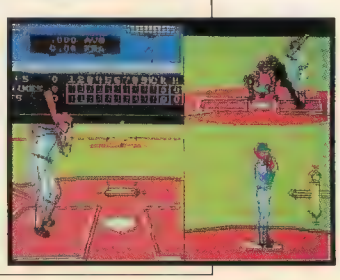
Orel Hershiser's Strike Zone

Taken from the arcade hit *Strike Zone*, this baseball simulation allows you to pitch, hit, and run the bases.

Though *Orel Hershiser's Strike Zone* doesn't feature official baseball teams or their players, it does permit you to practice baseball fundamentals in either batting practice or game play. You can alternate swinging and pitching against the computer or a friend. Throw a curveball or a sinker, hit home runs and bunts, and try to steal bases as you outwit your opponent's strategies. Your outfielders respond automatically to pop flies and other game events. Be sure to keep an eye on the scoreboards and the reporters as they amass your statistics.

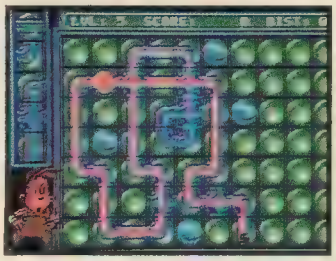
But with its lack of real teams or players, *Orel Hershiser's Strike Zone* is strictly for avid baseball fanatics.

Melbourne House



SPECIAL BUYER'S GUIDE SECTION

Pipe Dream



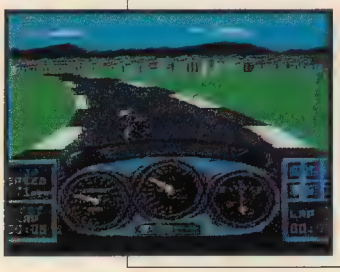
One of the most unusual — but addictive — strategy games available, *Pipe Dream* gives you the opportunity to plumb the depths of your puzzle-solving abilities. It sounds easy: lay pipe on a grid of squares so that the pipe forms a continuous line. The straight, curved, and cross-section shaped pipe pieces are displayed to one side.

You have to lay the pipe in the order it falls, so thinking ahead is a must. Soon after you begin laying the pipe, a liquid called flooz will start to flow through it. You must finish a pipeline before the flooz catches up with you.

Your score increases dramatically with more complex configurations. If you can use five cross-section pipes so the flooz doubles back over itself, or if you can exceed the required number of pieces for each line, you can rack up huge scores. *Pipe Dream* encourages everyone to exercise their plumbing expertise.

Lucasfilm

Pocket Rockets



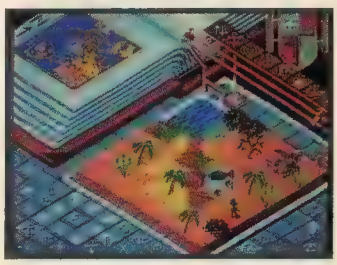
Nothing matches the sheer thrill of flat-out racing on the latest, hottest, fastest motorcycles available today—and nothing matches the danger.

Start by selecting your 600 cc machine. Choose between the Suzuki Katana, the Kawasaki Ninja, the Honda Hurricane, or the Yamaha FZR. Rev your engine, and you're off! With this simulation's highly precise instrument panels, you can accurately shift gears as you accelerate and decelerate, trying to stay on course while you beat the clock in the road race. Or you can let fly down a quarter-mile straight course in the drag race.

Since you have no competitors on either course, *Pocket Rockets* is for serious motorcycle buffs who long only to savor the excitement of racing against the clock on the most powerful two- wheeled vehicles around.

Capcom

Populous



Imagine being a god, able to demolish entire continents or build mountain ranges. *Populous* lets you do all this and more as you take on the role of one of two powerful deities.

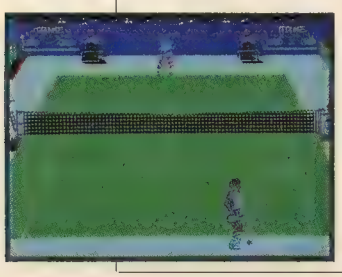
Your people must become the superior race — good or evil—on the worlds presented for your domination. To insure this, use your powers of destruction and creation to prevent the other god (played by the computer or by a friend via a modem) and his people from reigning supreme. At the beginning of the game, the people are quite primitive, but with repeated successes over your opposing deity, they can become technological marvels.

For variety, use the "Promised Lands" accessory disk included with the game to turn your folk into soldiers of the French Revolution, Old West cowboys, or building block people.

Populous' novel premise and engaging graphics make this a highly addictive game.

Electronic Arts

Pro Tennis Tour



Are you ready to try your hand (and your serve) in the Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon, and the U.S. Open? You begin far down the ranks as the 64th seed, and you must defeat top tennis pros as you climb the ladder of success.

Using the automatic serving machine, practice to get your strokes down, then work on your serves. Once you're ready to play, select one of the three courts (grass, clay, or cement) and one of the three levels of play (easy, advanced, or professional). Play the computer or play a friend, and if you want to revel in an especially glorious shot, you can use the instant replay mode to enjoy your expertise for a second time.

Realistic distractions, graphics, and animation make *Pro Tennis Tour* a hot shot among tennis simulations.

Ubi Soft

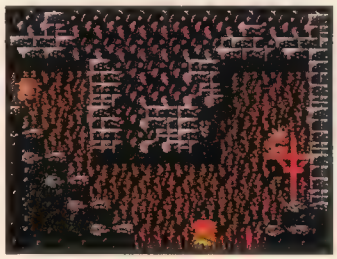
Rick Dangerous

From the makers of such high-voltage entertainment as *F-15 Strike Eagle II*, *M-1 Tank Platoon*, and *Red Storm Rising* comes this Indiana Jones spoof.

As the intrepid explorer Rick Dangerous, you must survive four separate adventures to save the free world. Explore an ancient Amazon temple, then travel to Egypt to search for a priceless jewel inside a pyramid. Rescue Allied POWs inside a castle and you'll have the information you need to uncover a secret Nazi missile base. There's just one catch — since there is no save-game feature, you must develop all the speed and cunning you'll need to overcome the obstacles of all four sections in one sitting.

And would you believe that your only weapons to accomplish this near-impossible task are a six-shooter, some dynamite, and a big stick? Think you're up to it?

MicroPlay



Risk

Long a favorite board game for armchair conquerors, *Risk* has now come to computers. Like its counterpart, the computer version begins with a map divided into territories. You then choose in which territories you want to begin and where you wish to place your armies in your attempt to rule the world.

You can strike out to vanquish all six continents at once. Or, if you're a more studious conqueror, try playing the United Kingdom or United States games programmed into *Risk*. You can even design your own empire with the customized editor. Up to six would-be Napoleons can play in any combination of human and computer opponents.

If you have CGA or Tandy graphics, the world map will be split in two and you'll have to scroll back and forth to plot your strategy. But if you have EGA or VGA, the entire map appears on the screen — obviously making game play easier.

Leisure Genius

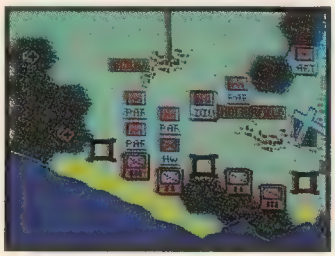
Rommel — Battles for North Africa

Providing yet another example of the success of SSG's Battlefront game system, *Rommel — Battles for North Africa* permits the war gamer to reenact the famous North African campaign of World War II. In fact, you can even participate in events that never actually occurred — most notably, the German invasion of Malta.

Though you don't have direct tactical control over every battalion, you must make decisions before each turn regarding the status, fire support, fatigue, and injuries of your units. Then issue your orders, sit back, and wait for the computer to play out your tactics. Often, as in real battles, things don't happen as planned.

With its simulations of actual battles, planned battles, and battles which you construct, this World War II game provides countless hours of wargaming entertainment.

SSG



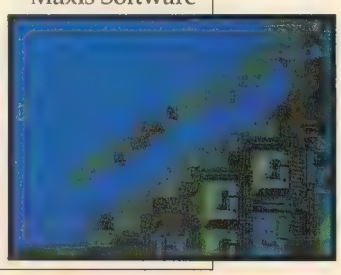
Sim City

So — a game that's used in college courses across the country couldn't possibly be any fun, right? Wrong. *Sim City* combines civics with strategy and role playing for a fun and educational look at urban planning.

As mayor of the Sims (simulated people), you begin with 100 square miles of virgin land and water that must be zoned and developed. Over time, the resident Sims begin to demand such amenities as fire stations, sports stadiums, and airports. To provide these necessities of modern life, you must tax, plan, and budget carefully. And of course, you have to be prepared for such unexpected catastrophes as nuclear meltdowns and Godzilla invasions that can ruin even the best of plans.

Whether you begin with one of the included scenarios or construct your metropolis from scratch, *Sim City* will hold you spellbound as you attempt to combat urban blight.

Maxis Software



SPECIAL BUYER'S GUIDE SECTION

Space Rogue

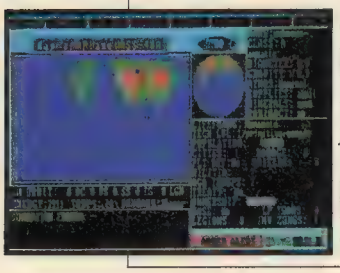
Do you think modern society is a bore? Would you rather rely on your strength, your wits, and your tenacity? Satisfy the daredevil in your soul by playing *Space Rogue*, a futuristic adventure game set in a galaxy near you.

With your crew destroyed by space pirates and only an abandoned Sunracer for transport, you must forage for your survival in the depths of space. First, learn to pilot the quirky Sunracer — a risky venture in itself. Then choose whether you wish to earn your money legally or illegally. As you progress, you can gather information (and potential business partners) by visiting space stations.

With its black market employment opportunities, sudden space battles, and unexpected encounters, *Space Rogue* can make even an anachronism feel right at home.

Origin

Starfleet II: Krellan Commander



Travel to exotic lands, discover unexplored pockets of wealth, meet exciting new peoples — then kill them. In *Starfleet II: Krellan Commander*, you're an Earthling commander simulating Krellan missions in order to understand the thought processes of the enemy. But remember, your task is to reproduce Krellan actions accurately, so you must learn to think with the calculation and ruthlessness of your sworn enemies.

As you travel through space, you can invade, explore, and conquer any planets you encounter. You can also capture or destroy Star Fleet warships and freighters. Satiate your desire for power as you exploit natural resources, conquer cowering aliens, and destroy all who are misguided enough to oppose you. And if you're successful, you'll receive a promotion.

Is this a great galaxy, or what?

Interstel

Starflight 2: Trade Routes of the Cloud Nebula

A combination of bartering, exploration, and battle, *Starflight 2: Trade Routes of the Cloud Nebula* requires all your diplomatic skills, as well as your fighting prowess.

But before you can begin to exchange goods with alien races, you must outfit your ship and hire your crew. You can choose crew members from different races, and each race best suits a particular crew position.

Explore and trade for valuable elements as you travel through space. After all, if you can find the mother lode of shyneum — the energy source that makes the universe go 'round — you'll never have financial worries again.

Oh yes, and while you're at it, try to rid the galactic neighborhood of the disgusting Spemin and the techno-wizardry they've managed to get their flagella on. But be careful — they're no fonder of you than you are of them.

SSI

Star Saga: Two

An intergalactic space opera advanced by 50,000 paragraphs of text, *Star Saga: Two* is a truly impressive role-playing space adventure. You choose to portray any one of six characters, and then prepare — as best you can — to face the vicious Clathrans. This evil race holds an inexplicable hatred for Earthlings and has begun a universe-wide sweep in order to locate Earth and destroy it.

You must gather information, explore, and trade to build up your ship's military power. Remember that, as you progress through the universe, your goal is always to prevent the Clathrans from destroying Earth.

With its almost sinister tone and expertly written text, *Star Saga: Two* creates a sense of pervasive, almost tangible evil — and only you can stop it.

MasterPlay

Star Trek V: The Final Frontier

Boldly go where no man has gone before with *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*. In this game, you play Captain James Tiberius Kirk, leader of the starship *Enterprise*.

It's no surprise that you and your crew must navigate through numerous hazards on your way to Nimbus III. Faithfully digitized images bring such crew members as Spock, McCoy, Uhura, and Scotty to your aid — when they're not fighting among themselves, that is.

During your voyage, you must escape the Klingons, navigate safely through a mine field, survive the Barrier Zone, and transport three intergalactic ambassadors to a safe planet. Even the most concerted attempts to succeed may fail.

Based on last summer's movie, *Star Trek V* is a beautiful game — but it's so hard to get into that few players will survive their five-year mission.

Mindscape

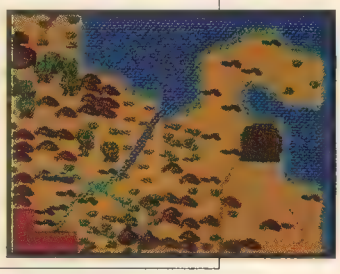
Sword of Aragon

A rich combination of strategy and fantasy role playing, *Sword of Aragon* is truly an epic.

When your father is slain by an evil magician while he was attempting to unify the rugged land of Aragon, he leaves you a unique heritage. You set out to complete his mission — and avenge his death — with only a minimal army and treasury. You'll wage campaigns in an ever-widening circle around your home city of Aladda, gradually increasing your empire and cleaning out the undesirables.

But once a land is conquered, it must be ruled. Develop its resources, gain its support, and tax its people in order to continue toward your ultimate goal: ruling all of Aragon. Unfortunately, the evil Duke of Tetrada has the same goal, and eventually the two of you must battle for supreme leadership.

SSI



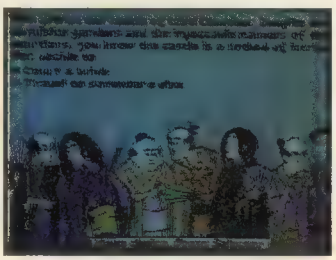
Sword of the Samurai

Begin as a simple samurai and work your way through the ranks to hatamoto, daimyo, and — if you are clever, lucky, and resourceful — shogun, ruler of all 48 Japanese provinces.

During your strenuous climb up the political ladder, you're forced to defend your honor against fellow lords' armies as well as in one-on-one duels. Be aware of the countless manipulations and machinations of the opposing lords as you attempt to outmaneuver them with your savvy political plots. Don't get too sidetracked by the various incidents and campaigns you encounter. Your struggles will lead you to great honor — but only if you're successful.

An astonishingly beautiful game, *Sword of the Samurai* effectively uses graphics and sound to evoke an era of exceptional beauty and complexity.

MicroProse



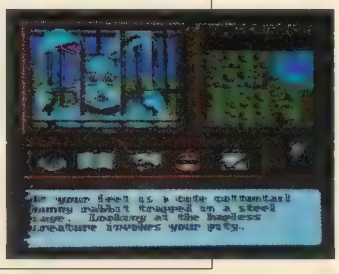
Tangled Tales

In this game for role-playing beginners, you're a wizard's apprentice. Having lost all the spells in your spell book, you must successfully complete three adventures before the wizard will agree to return them to you.

Unlike more advanced role-playing games, you don't build your character, map the terrain, or explore a vast world. Instead, you simply pursue the missions the wizard assigns to you, meeting various characters along the way, and then report back to your mentor after each adventure for upgrades to your lowly apprentice's abilities. And if you die, don't worry — the wizard will revive you, each and every time.

With its lighthearted approach and lack of complicated features, *Tangled Tales* is a perfect introduction to this usually complex genre.

Origin



SPECIAL BUYER'S GUIDE SECTION

Targhan

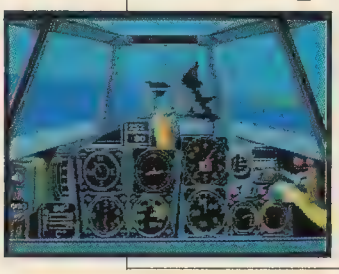
In *Targhan*, you'll fight your way through the forest of Luneclare moving toward the castle of the Evil One. Only by vanquishing him can you save your village of Edengahrn.

An exceptionally well-rendered game, this sword-and-sorcery adventure requires you to fight with both your sword and shuriken — and don't forget your magical skills. However, with the limited save-game feature, you must map your progress carefully as you undertake the perilous trek over the hills and through the woods. If you keep an eye out for scrolls as well as statues during your journey, you just might survive.

With over 120 landscapes, 40 characters, and excellent digitized sound effects and music, *Targhan* steps far above the usual offerings of this genre.

Silmarils

Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain



It's not a game just for World War II buffs. Any player will find that *Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain* soars above its competition.

The variety of available options allows you to replay this famous battle in almost any way imaginable. Fly individual sorties or entire campaigns for either the British or the German forces in a Hawker Hurricane, a Spitfire, a Heinkel He-111, or any of five other aircraft. You can watch the realistic tracers, flak bursts, and other colorful scenery from the pilot's, gunner's, or bombardier's positions. Or use the combat camera to replay your battles, analyze your mistakes, improve your tactics, and gloat over your victories.

Its dedication to exceptional accuracy and realism makes *Their Finest Hour* not only fun, but also educational.

Lucasfilm

Tongue of the Fatman

Cross a science fiction novel with the World Wrestling Federation, and you might end up with this humorous hybrid of intergalactic wrestling with no holds barred.

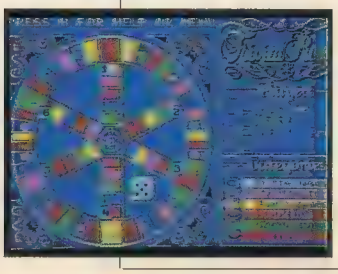
You begin with $1,000 with which you can gamble or purchase wild weapons at Doctor Kadavar's "Boutique of Bloodlust" to enhance your chances. Defeat a variety of alien opponents, win money after each victory, and wrestle your way up the tournament ladder.

Your eventual goal is to defeat the sumo wrestler who's the proprietor of this joint, Mondu the Fat. Unfortunately, Mondu is an opponent with an unusually vicious tongue, both in and out of the ring.

A quirky sense of humor and an unusual assortment of fighting moves make this game both amusing and challenging.

Activision

Trivial Pursuit



Trivial Pursuit was *the* game of the 80s. When the popularity of the original board game became apparent, special editions were published with Baby Boomers, children, movie fans, sports freaks, and other focus groups in mind.

But with this computer version of *Trivial Pursuit*, you get five of those special editions: 1980s, Volume II, Sports, Music, and Movies. Play a complete game from a single edition, or use the mix-and-match option to custom design your own game by selecting a category or two from each edition.

Most of the six computer players could stand some remedial classroom work, but you can play with up to four friends — so who needs computer opponents! Our only gripe is that it's too easy to cheat in a solo game.

Parker Brothers

TV Sports: Football

All 28 NFL teams are represented in this football simulation in which either you or the computer can select your strategy. You can practice specific plays, go through an exhibition season, or attempt to win it all in the regular season and subsequent playoffs.

If you don't begin to call a play within eight seconds, the computer will call one for you. Although this may seem disconcerting, the computer can determine your playing style readily enough and will make calls similar to your own after awhile. Each team plays differently, so be sure to take their individual idiosyncracies into account.

And don't forget the arcade aspects. To win in those areas, you must practice your kicking, rushing, and passing, and then go for it all in *TV Sports: Football.*

Cinemaware

Universe 3

You are Alex G. Seward, captain of the FWS *Union.* Your mission is to reestablish lost ties with the Home-Cluster in order to stem recent hostilities among the worlds in your Local Group.

As this sequel to *Universe* and *Universe II* begins, you are in your ship, but some difficulties seem to have arisen. During your journey, you'll discover a traitor on board, you'll lose a diplomat, and you'll misplace your mission orders. And what about those rumors of an espionage plot?

Once you have taken care of those little inconveniences, proceed in your shuttle to the surface of the planet Ambergris to begin searching for relevant facts.

Totally unlike its predecessors in game play, this graphics-based role-playing space odyssey places an entirely new adventure into a familiar universe.

Omnitrend

Vette!

Slide behind the wheel of your Corvette and race against one of four European competitors in *'Vette!.*

You can choose between the 1989 stock model, ZR1 King of the Hill, Callaway Twin Turbo, or Callaway Sledgehammer. Be sure to avoid cops, pedestrians, and traffic jams as you cruise through the extremely realistic streets of San Francisco to win one of the four available races. The map provided with the game will help as you plot your course. And you can use the windshield, side, or helicopter views for assistance as you maneuver crowded highways. Tired of the race? You can check out the landmarks of the City by the Bay by driving off the course.

Shift gears yourself, or have the computer do it for you. Either way, you're sure to enjoy some spectacular racing action in *'Vette!.*

Spectrum Holobyte

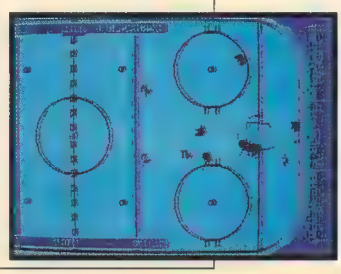
Wayne Gretzky Hockey

So you want to play hockey — real hockey, not some imitation version with a lot of fisticuffs on ice. Then pick up *Wayne Gretzky Hockey,* a sport simulation with enough options to keep any hockey fanatic happy.

Coach the team, control the players, or let the computer take on one or both tasks. You can edit the players' statistics and watch as the stats mount during play. Select skill levels, speed, and period length as you play regulation or playoff games. You can even choose whether or not fighting will be allowed.

You may not take on the Great One head-to-head in this game, but you can do just about anything he can do — and more. It's the most hockey action possible on a PC.

Bethesda Softworks



SPECIAL BUYER'S GUIDE SECTION

Welltris

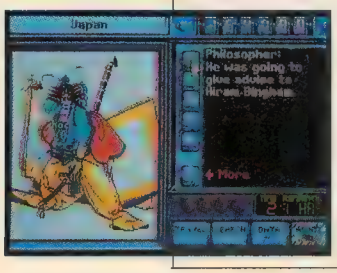
It isn't easy to be the sequel to a game as popular as *Tetris*. *Welltris*, however, manages to match the absorbing fascination that made its predecessor such a hit.

This time, you maneuver two-dimensional blocks into a three-dimensional well. Once again, you try to form unbroken rows of squares across the bottom, and those unbroken rows then drop out of sight. But in this incarnation, the rows can be formed either vertically or horizontally. If a piece gets stuck on a wall because the floor is full of blocks, that wall then temporarily freezes and cannot be used until three other pieces have been placed.

Like all good sequels, *Welltris* adds some new twists to an old favorite. Though the new elements may make the game more challenging for some, it's still as difficult to turn off as *Tetris* ever was.

Spectrum Holobyte

Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?



That master thief is at it again — only this time, she has stolen a time machine. Now all the treasures of both the present and the past are at the mercy of Carmen and her gang.

You can track her nefarious criminal activities from continent to continent, century to century, by following her in your own chronoskimmer. Naturally, you have only a limited amount of time in which to question witnesses, use your scanner, and make time jumps to catch Carmen and her cronies. Your cases include retrieving the original Magna Carta, Don Quixote's lance, Paul Revere's horse, and the manuscript of *Huckleberry Finn*.

One of the more educational games on the market, this latest addition to the *Carmen Sandiego* series is not just a history lesson — it's an adventure as well.

Broderbund

Windwalker

It's been your distinct honor to serve Moebius, the Windwalker, master of a thousand ancient arts. Now it seems he has a quest for you.

Before you can begin your quest, however, you must train in the martial arts. Learn to fight well, and you will gain the confidence *not* to fight and thereby seek a more enlightened solution to your problems. You will then be ready to bring peace to all people.

As you wander the countryside, however, you uncover a terrible evil wrought on the land by Zhurong and his alchemist ally, Shen Jang. Perhaps Moebius selected you in order to overcome their reign of terror as well as spread knowledge of the true path. Are you prepared for the awesome responsibility conferred upon you?

Origin

Wings of Fury

Wings of Fury is a bomb-and-strafe marathon, with some fairly lethal dogfighting thrown in for good measure. It pits Hellcat fighter-bombers against fortified Japanese islands, warships, and Zeros.

Superb graphics and animation make this game sizzle. The little Hellcats handle beautifully, even under keyboard control. When you come in low for a strafing run against one of the islands, your guns kick up realistic fountains of sand, and tiny animated enemy soldiers run frantically to get out of the way. Bomb, rocket, and torpedo effects — not to mention the many crash landings you'll make — are all rendered in extraordinary detail.

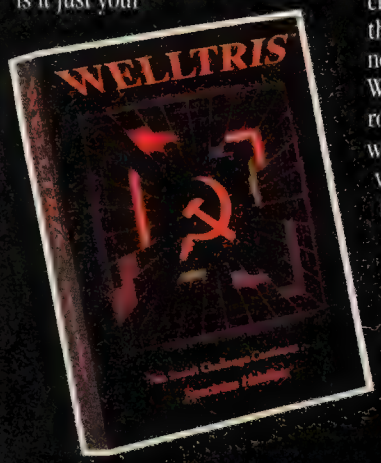
Loads of fun and just the right amount of challenge combine to make the game appealing for everyone.

Broderbund

GP

ANOTHER SOVIET CHALLENGE OF NEW DIMENSIONS - WELLTRIS

Step into another dimension! Is this pit of falling WELLTRIS™ pieces really drawing you down into its very depths or is it just your imagination? In this latest Soviet mind teaser Alexey Pajitnov, the designer of the award-winning TETRIS™ challenge, transports us into the next dimension. There's a new angle at every turn. WELLTRIS pieces can be rotated within each wall, as well as around the four outer walls while falling deeper into the pit. With three difficulty levels containing five speeds each, few will be able to master the challenge. There is no escape—if TETRIS didn't get you, WELLTRIS will!



Spectrum HoloByte™

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WARNING: Publisher cannot be held responsible for addictive tendencies developing in WELLTRIS players.

Available on IBM, Macintosh, and Amiga.

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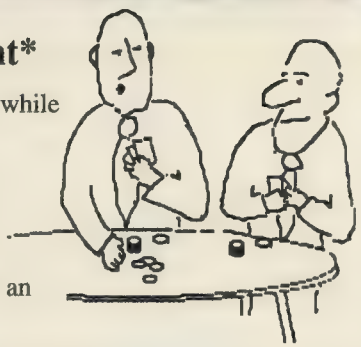

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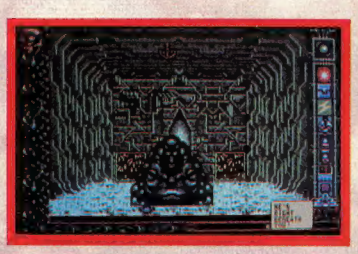

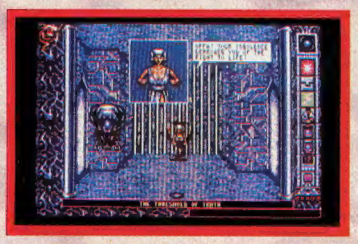

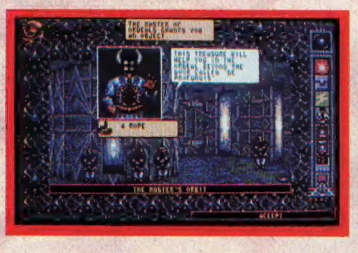

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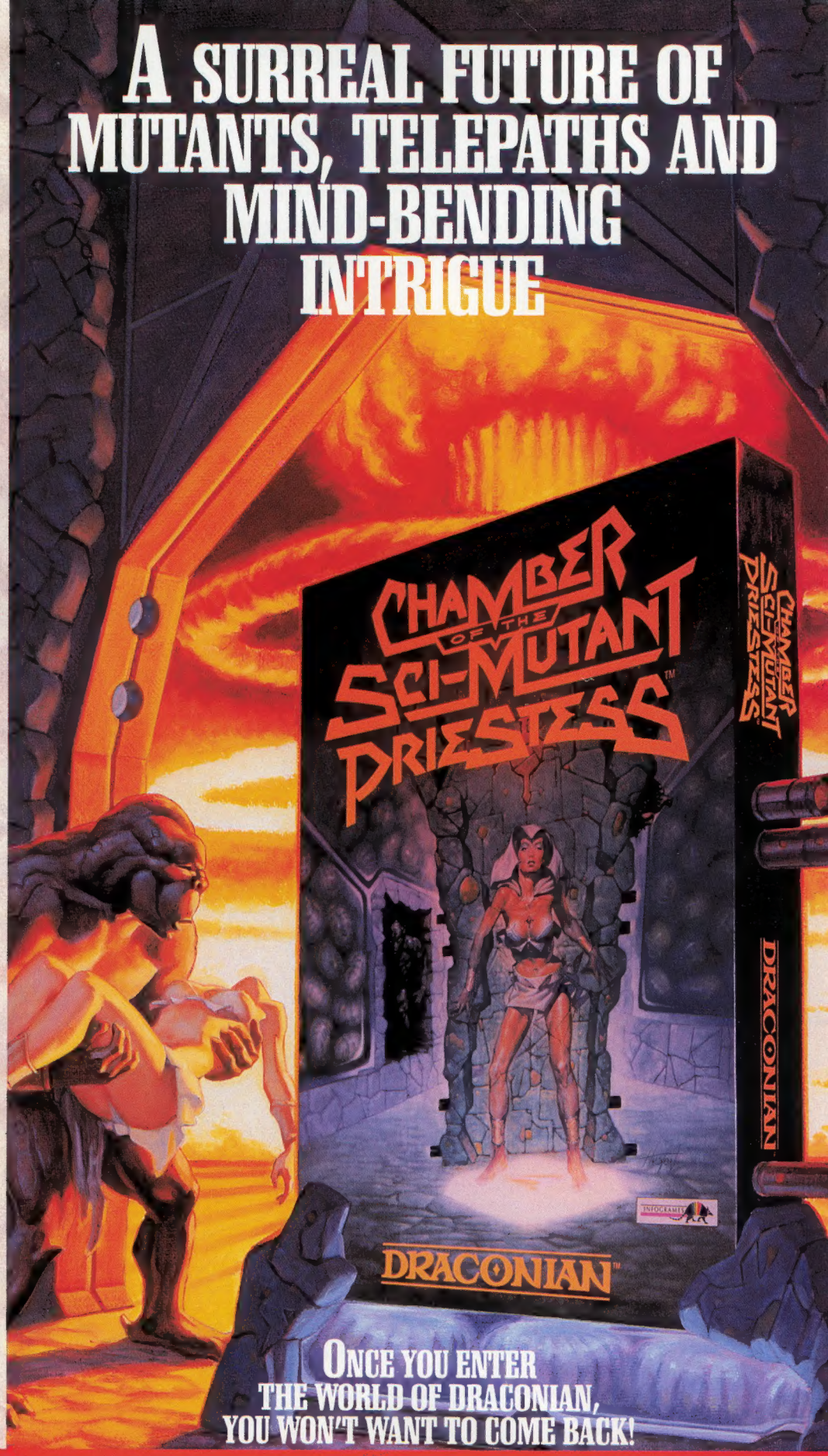

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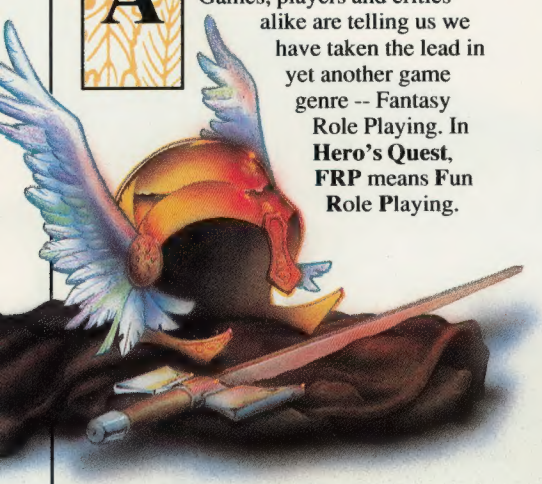

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